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CHANCES AND CHANGES

A DOMESTIC STORY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "SIX WEEKS ON THE LOIRE."

Beattie, Elizabeth

"Of *chance* or *change*, O let not man complain."

BEATTIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CHANCES AND CHANGES.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGER.

“O HOW dull I feel without Amelia!” said Catherine Neville to her father, the day after her married sister had left the Rectory, where she had been spending Christmas. “Her room looks so forlorn, now that she is gone! I have been putting the children’s playthings away, and I could have cried over them, they

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reminded me so of the darlings! Well! you may say what you like about parting, but I am sure those who go away have a great advantage over those that remain stationary."

"And yet you must allow that those who remain stationary, cannot be so much moved," said her father, who, though a great admirer of wit in others, and a very competent judge of it, rarely gave himself the trouble to rise beyond a pun.

"Now you shall move your fiddlestick for that," cried Catherine, running to open her pianoforte, "we will have a nice long practise, and that will get the morning over."

"So it might," replied Mr. Neville, "but unfortunately for your design against time, I must think not of quavers and crotchets, but capers and curvets;—you forget it is the visitation;—and here comes the poney, I declare! and I have neither got my bands tied, nor my spurs buckled."

“ I have almost forgotten how to do such things,” said Catherine, as she knelt to button her father’s gaiters, “ between little Catherine and Percival I was quite turned out of office.”

“ Ah, the little rogues ! I wish they were back again,” said Mr. Neville, as he went to mount his grey poney, which was as well known at the visitations and quarter sessions as himself.

“ And so do I !” thought Catherine, as she slowly returned to the parlour, and looked round it with that sort of enquiring air which seems to wonder if any thing can suddenly spring out of nothing, to afford matter of occupation, or amusement. “ I wish Fanny Brayswick had been at home. We might have taken a long walk : how unlucky it is ! I remember she was at her grandmother’s last year, too, when my sister went away. There are the Longcrofts, to be sure—but Edward is at the Hall now ; and I never like to go when he is

there; he grows so proud! I do think he will soon be as formal as his uncle."

Whilst Catherine thus held communion with herself, it began to rain, and she felt a little consoled in the thought that even if Fanny had not been at her grandmother's, or Edward not at the Hall, she still would have been obliged to remain at home; and she therefore began to think, in good earnest, of employing herself within doors: looking towards the window, in pensive contemplation of the weather, she recollected that the curtains which her sister had gone with her a few days before to the next market-town, purposely to assist her in choosing, ought to be cut out, and made up with all possible dispatch, or the winter would get over without any benefit from them: she determined to begin them that very day—it was just the kind of thing she should like—they would require some contriving, and her father would be out of the way, and she could have Margaret

to help her, and the draperies should be exactly like her sister's, at Blackthorn Cottage.

It is impossible to be very busy and very unhappy at the same time. Catherine soon forgot that she was alone. She ordered dinner early, and the instant that it was over she began her plan of operations. The hours flew by unperceived, on the wings of occupation, and evening came as unexpectedly as it had seemed to do, when she had her sister to talk to, and her little niece and nephew to play with. She had just mounted on her music-stool, to measure the length of the windows, when she fancied she heard the sound of wheels. She stopped, and listened :—

“Surely Margaret,” said she, “I hear a chaise ! I hope my father has not been taken ill.”

“No, Miss, it can't be measter, for Cæsar keeps sic a barking—it's moast likely Carrier, it's just about his time.”

“Then very likely it may be, and I hope he has brought me my books,” said Catherine, making a fresh effort to raise her hands high enough to hang a breadth of chintz from the top of the window; but whilst she was so doing, and just as Margaret was saying she knew it was the carrier, for she could swear to his step, the door was thrown open, and in walked a tall man, wrapped up in a military great coat, trimmed with fur, and braided, and frogged, in all the “pride, pomp, and circumstance” of modern fashion.

Catherine immediately descended from her elevation; not quite able to suppress a smile, as she thought of the ridiculous figure she must have made on it, half hidden in folds of drapery, which, sweeping to the ground and covering the stool on which she was standing, prevented the cause of her heightened stature from being at first discovered. She however advanced to meet the stranger, who looked pale and fatigued,

and who, she perceived, on looking more narrowly at him, wore his left arm in a sling. He bowed with easy grace, and after expressing himself unfortunate in not finding Mr. Neville at home, begged leave to enquire how long his absence might be protracted; Catherine replied she was expecting him every instant, and requested that in the interval she might give orders for the horses to be put into the stable. The "Unknown" chose however to keep them in waiting, nor would he even lay aside his great coat, though he condescended to throw himself into the chair, which, Margaret, after she had cleared it of its share of lining and fringes, had respectfully handed to him.

Catherine was somewhat ashamed of the confusion in which the room appeared; for she was aware that men make no distinction with respect to the cause or nature of a litter; they see something that they fancy looks uncomfortable, but what it is, or how long it may con-

tinue, they never think of ascertaining. Margaret, however, soon put every thing to rights, and then, bringing in the candles and tea-things, greatly relieved her young mistress by giving her something to do; for she could scarcely find a word to say to her unexpected visitor, who looked very grave and very ill; and though he occasionally addressed himself to her with an air of politeness, and even of interest, yet he seemed greatly to prefer remaining silent, with his large dark eyes fixed on a wood fire which threw such a vivid light upon his sallow complexion, as made it look altogether ghastly. Tea, however, seemed to have the effect of a cordial on him; the expression of uneasiness in his countenance gradually abated, and Catherine would have begun to feel quite at ease in his presence; but she heard the rain and sleet patter against the windows, and she could not help thinking of the horses and post-boy; she ventured to say something in their behalf to her

guest, but he, opposite to the full blaze of the fire, and his great coat still buttoned, said that it was not at all cold, and that a little waiting would do neither the horses nor the driver any more harm than it would the chaise. "All machines together, I suppose," thought Catherine, "in his estimation. How Amelia would have disliked this man if she had been here!" This reflection, as well as all the reflections which it might have involved, was, perhaps fortunately for him who had given rise to it, interrupted by the well-known regular trot of the grey pony.

In a few minutes Mr. Neville rang at the gate—alighted—walked up the garden—entered the little hall—hung up his hat—put his whip into its accustomed place, and patted Cæsar on the head. The stranger smiled as he listened to all his movements. "How familiar that step sounds!" said he, at the same time rising, and advancing towards the door, at that moment

opened by Mr. Neville. They flew to meet each other "My good friend ! my dear Mr. Neville !" "My dear Hamilton ! my dear boy !" Catherine could scarcely help smiling at her father's exclamation ; but she found from it that this same " dear boy," was a gentleman well known to her by name, who had been her father's pupil at college some dozen years before, and to whose gratitude for the instruction at that time imparted by him, he owed the living of Nethercross. " You are welcome into Craven, heartily welcome," said the worthy Rector, still shaking his unexpected guest by the hand, " the first time, I think, you have been so far north ? You will find plenty of game here—I hope you are come to take up your quarters with us during the sporting season." Hamilton hesitated ; he looked towards Catherine—he was about to say something, but checked himself, and in a few minutes afterwards, requested to speak to his old friend alone. They retired ;

and Catherine, far from feeling any pique at this evident exclusion from the confidence of her new acquaintance, rejoiced in his absence, as it afforded her an opportunity to order supper, and see his bed-room made ready for him.

The secret conference was long, and when the parties returned, it seemed as if Hamilton had infected Mr. Neville with his gravity. The chaise was however dismissed—the luggage brought in—the furred coat taken off—but the pigeons, tarts and cream made their appearance in vain; supper was scarcely tasted, and as soon as it was taken away, Mr. Neville said, “Do not let us detain you Colonel Hamilton; you are, I dare say, tired enough, with the distance you have come to day.” The Colonel accordingly bowed, and immediately took his candlestick, without waiting for prayers, which Catherine thought rather strange, as he must have seen that she was at that very moment

bringing the book to her father; and he too, no more inclined for conversation than his guest, as soon as ever the family worship was over, wished her good night.

“It is to be sure very dull,” thought Catherine, as she closed her chamber door, “to have no companion when one wants to make a few remarks, or to ask an opinion. How I do wish Amelia had just stayed over this evening with us!”

The wish however was vain, and Catherine never grieved long about impossibilities! she therefore took a volume of translations from the classics, a course of which had been recommended to her, by her father, for her winter studies, and resolved to read a book of the “Thebaid” before she went to bed: but the feuds of Eteocles and Polynices, did not tend to compose her spirits; and when at length she fell asleep, she dreamed that she was exalted on a music-stool in a tent, and that Colonel

Hamilton rode round and round it, at full gallop, on a charger, which at last made a spring towards her, and she awoke in a fright.

CHAPTER II.

DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS.

AT peep of day Catherine arose ; for she was determined that the nerves of her father's visitor should not be irritated by his seeing her bustle about. Accordingly she fed her birds, arranged her plants, finished the cutting out of her curtains, and got every thing ready for breakfast by eight o'clock. Her father smiled, as he entered the room and cast his eye towards the

table, where the green-and-gold china was set out on a home-spun cloth as white as snow. "I am afraid," said he, "all this grand display is thrown away, at least for this morning, as far as the gentleman for whom I presume it to be intended may be concerned. Colonel Hamilton requests that he may have a large basin of tea, and a small piece of dry toast sent up to him at half-past ten."

"Sent up to him ! and so late !" exclaimed Catherine, "He must be very ill."

"I fear he is," replied her father, "though his lying in bed is no proof of it ; we must not expect town gentlemen to come all at once into country hours." This explanation satisfied Catherine, who proceeded to make tea ; and after breakfast, as it was only nine o'clock, and the sun was shining with that clearness which makes a fine winter morning, when it does occur, seem of more value than all the cloudless skies of summer ; she proposed to take a walk, before

Colonel Hamilton should come downstairs. "And then," added she, "I will just call at Mrs. Brayswick's, and ask when she expects Fanny home, for somehow or other I quite long to see her."

"Why my dear Catherine," said her father, with a little hesitation in his manner, "if that be all you have to enquire after, I had rather you did not call there, or indeed anywhere else, just now; in fact, Colonel Hamilton wishes for a few days, or it may be for a few weeks, to keep himself quite retired. Now of course if you call anywhere you must mention his being with us, or else your silence would appear very odd, and then we should have invitations and civilities on all sides. You know very well how a thing of that kind runs from one village to another, like wild-fire, all throughout Craven. From what little you have seen already of Colonel Hamilton, you may imagine that it would be no great treat to him to walk two or three miles to a tea-party, to meet a

dozen old ladies, and the Apothecary and myself, and play at three-penny whist: but there are many other reasons too—far weightier; I wish they were not so important—a sad thing! a sad thing—however, it can't be helped now.”

But all Catherine's curiosity was swallowed up in her eagerness to set her father's mind at ease. “It is no matter,” said she, “I will not go out at all to day: enquiring about Fanny will not bring her back again any sooner, and I have plenty to do at home.”

Her father's smile was quite reward sufficient to her, for this little act of self-denial, and away she flew into the kitchen, to consult with Rachel, the old cook, whose idol she was, on the important point of having chickens boiled, and mutton roasted, or the case reversed.

When Catherine returned to the parlour she found Hamilton there, in his brocaded robe-de-chambre and Turkish slippers: the ever-ready

smile played round her lips, in spite of her endeavour to conquer it, as she made her curtesy to him; for she had never seen a gentleman in any thing like the same *costume* before, except, indeed, my Lord Ogleby, at Covent Garden once, when she had visited London with her sister, in the capacity of her bridesmaid.

“I do not, however, remind him of *charming Miss Fanny*,” thought she, as he half raised himself from his chair to return her salutation, and then sunk back again with an air of inexpressible *ennui*. Catherine wished she had been lucky enough not to have come into the room whilst he was there alone; but, however, the mischief was done, for she could not run out again immediately; she therefore sate down to her work, and as Hamilton cast a glance upon her glowing cheek, “Here,” said he to himself, “begins the misery of being in the house with a pretty country girl, when one

is in no humour to make love. She must think me inconceivably stupid, or wonderfully savage."

Now it happened that, just at that moment, he felt more really in want of something to say than she did, and all he could think of was—

"I suppose you do not see a daily paper here?"

"No sir, we have only the York Courant once a week," replied Catherine—then, after considering a moment, she went to the book-case, adding, "will you give me leave to bring you any of these volumes?"

The dread of being compelled to go through the "Spectator," or "Smollett's Voyages," or the "History of England," effectually roused Hamilton from his languor.

"My dear Miss Neville," he exclaimed, "I must beg of you not to give yourself any trouble about me. Do not think because I look grave that I want amusement; and pray

do not let me put any restraint upon your employments, for I am aware that just now I am not worth the fatigue of entertaining."

Catherine coloured deeply, under the idea that she might have outstepped the frigid line which modern politeness prescribes to its votaries; but she made no reply, and her father just then coming in, and finding them both silent, cried out:—

"Come Catherine, this is the time you always give to your piano. Colonel Hamilton will fancy himself in your way, if he finds out that he makes any alteration in your plans."

Of course the Colonel declared that he should be quite unhappy if she did not sit down to her instrument, and she began to think she had indeed better do anything than continue a fruitless endeavour to keep up conversation with one who either had nothing to say, or did not think it worth his while to make a single remark to her.

“ His a polished mind indeed ! he must be strangely altered since my father had the direction of what I have often heard him call his fine talents !” With this reflection Catherine opened her music books.

“ Now for the Battle of Prague, or the White blossom’d Thorn !” thought Hamilton, groaning in the agony of his musical spirit. His ears were, however, agreeably surprised with some of the fullest harmonies of Corelli, and whilst listening to the “ thick coming fancies” and rich modulations of that exquisite composer, he was sensible only of one comparison, and that was, how far more satisfactory they were to taste and feeling than all the long flourishes, and contorted difficulties, and noisy frippery of too many modern composers, who address themselves to the finger and the eye, instead of the ear and the heart.

“ How those sounds bring old Trinity before

my eyes, again !” he exclaimed to Mr. Neville, “ Do not you remember, sir, how I used to bargain with you for a set to with our violins, when I had thundered out as many Greek verses as you chose to task me with ?”

“ Aye ! and don’t you remember how I could get nothing out of you, just after your father gave you your commission, but

‘ Old Chiron thus spoke to his pupil Achilles ’ ?”

“ Oh yes !

‘ Visions of glory spare my aching sight,’

I am afraid I have never been so much of a hero since.—What is it that makes us look back with such delight on the days of our youth ? Is it novelty that gives such a zest to life ?”

“ No,” said Mr. Neville, “ it is innocence :

if you trace the thing you will always find that retrospection becomes disagreeable, precisely at the point of time when it is, in some way or other, connected with self-reproach."

Hamilton looked as if he was endeavouring to ascertain this point, and to judge by his countenance, the result of his enquiry did not appear particularly gratifying to his self-love: but Mr. Neville, who would not intentionally have wounded the feelings of any human being, whose faults he might hope to correct in a less painful manner, was led, by what he had said, into a train of thought, respecting a discourse on conscience, which he was writing, and sitting down to his desk he forgot in a moment that there was any body else in the room.

The morning passed off tolerably well to Hamilton with "the concord of sweet sounds," and Catherine began to hope, from the interest

he had appeared to take in her music, that he would condescend to make himself more agreeable; but the time was not yet come.

At dinner he spoke little and ate less, yet notwithstanding the moderation of his repast, his cheeks glowed after it with feverish heat, and his eyes sparkled with morbid brilliancy. Catherine could not help feeling greatly concerned for him, as he threw himself upon the sofa, with the most unequivocal expression of both bodily and mental uneasiness, and she took her work to the window and sate there in perfect stillness, which was interrupted only by the chirping of her canary-birds, and the rustling they made as they hopped about in their little gilded prisons.

Such gentle and monotonous sounds are more soothing than entire silence; at least so Hamilton thought, as he listened to them with half-closed eyes, and contrasted the calm employ-

ments of the worthy inhabitants of the Rectory with the ceaseless and unprofitable bustle, the noisy and heartless gaiety of the circle she had recently left; but left like the stricken deer, with the barbed arrow accompanying him into the very abode of retirement and peace.

CHAPTER III.

WINTER AMUSEMENTS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the *awe* with which a character so entirely new to her had, at first, inspired Catherine, a very few days sufficed to make her feel perfectly at ease with her father's guest, who, on his part seemed, from the moment of his arrival, quite at home under the roof of the worthy man who had early gained his confidence and always retained his esteem.

The quiet habits, early hours, and simple pleasures of the rectory, suited Colonel Hamilton's state of health, and the season of the year favoured his wishes for privacy, by converting, for a time, what might always be deemed retirement into absolute seclusion.

To Mr. Neville and his daughter, the insulation which rain and snow and bad roads imposed upon them, presented nothing of dulness or privation ; but to most men of fashion it would have appeared something much akin to annihilation : happily for Hamilton, years spent in all the frivolities of dissipation had not effaced the impressions of his youth ; his understanding, naturally good, had been improved by an excellent education, and he had only to be thrown upon his own resources, to find that those resources still remained to him, a little rusted, indeed, by disuse, but fully capable of being brought into play again, under the favour-

ing circumstances of social feeling and congeniality of taste.

Catherine Neville's character presented that rare combination of the utmost simplicity of feminine attributes and pursuits, with a grasp of mind, and a thirst for information, which might have classed her intellect with that of masculine strength, had not the warmth of her affections, and the vivacity of her imagination, shed over it the "purple light" which though it may somewhat interfere with correctness of outline, yet renders even indistinctness a grace. It was the exact balance between her head and heart, that made Catherine every thing that was valuable and delightful; her affections would have found the circle in which they had to act, far too narrow for their exercise, had she depended solely on them for her happiness; but then her understanding came to her aid, and again, ere the general superiority of her acquire-

ments could inspire her with anything like distaste for her associates, or a sense of loveliness in herself, too often the task on refinement, "above proof" her sweet affections asserted their power, and linked her sympathies with those of even the dullest of her acquaintance, the humblest of her dependents.

Still Catherine would have found Nethercross, and its adjoining hamlets, a very confined scene for her enquiring mind and ardent fancy, had she not, fortunately for her, created a world to herself in her studies, which, at all reasonable intervals between her domestic duties, being old-fashioned enough to make them her daily and primary consideration, she pursued under the direction of her father, who habitually and unconsciously imparted to her, the sound principles and taste by which his own reading had been regulated. The Church History and Polemics, however, which formed a large portion of his literary stores, would have been rather too

strong a trial, even for Catherine's perseverance, without any admixture of lighter matter; nevertheless, no romance of a more modern date, than good Bishop Heliodorus' "Theagenes and Chariclea" was to be found amongst them, and the circulating library at the nearest market-town, she had completely exhausted, from "The Abbot" down to "Zeluco," in her first half-year's subscription to it. She was therefore forced to content herself, for the further exercise of her imagination, with the translations from the ancient poets, which, fortunately for her, stood within her reach, on the same shelves, side by side, with the originals. Her father, passionately fond of the classics in his youthful days, and still justly regarding them as the foundation of all poetic taste and historical knowledge, delighted to recal in his daughter's reading his own favourite academic pursuits: he taught her to trace in the fictions of the Greek and Roman bards, their connection with the religion and

history of their countries; in their figures and imagery, the allusions to their peculiar customs and ceremonies; and in their sentiments and reflections, that similarity of chequered destiny, that same conviction of the unsatisfactory nature of sublunary things, which human life and human reason have perpetually exhibited amid the vicissitudes of revolving ages. Thus the eager relish for fiction, which in all youthful minds is attendant on lively feelings, became to Catherine a foundation for the acquisition of the most important truths: she found history, geography, natural and revealed religion, all imperceptibly linked with the reading she had originally resorted to, only for amusement; and every addition she thus made to her knowledge of facts, was associated most delightfully in her mind, with some grace of poesy, some happy illustration of her father's, or some endearing recollection of the tranquil hour, in which it had impressed itself on her memory.

At the period of Colonel Hamilton's arrival, Catherine was in the midst of the Greek tragedies which she was eagerly devouring through the versions of Francklin and Potter. He was scholar enough to comment occasionally with Mr. Neville upon the meaning of a difficult passage in the original, and poet enough, when he was in good humour, to put a beautiful one into very tolerable verse for Catherine ; and the attention she paid to his remarks, gave him an interest in seeking out subjects for them, and inspired him with a wish to recal in her admiration, that novelty for himself, which gives such enviable freshness to the enjoyments of the young.

There is something so beautiful in pure, unadulterated enthusiasm, that it can rarely be contemplated without exciting correspondent emotion. It was impossible for Hamilton to sit beside Catherine, and see the earnestness with which she lent her imagination to the

theme before her, without sometimes participating in the delight his observations contributed to awaken, and feeling that she united in herself the loveliest attributes of the characters in whom she took so much interest :—the filial duty of Antigone, with the sisterly affection of Electra, and the confiding innocence of Iphigenia ; and though he might not have had virtue enough to admire very warmly any one of these characteristics, for its own sake alone, yet he could not help acknowledging to himself that such an attractive combination of them all had not before fallen within his observation ; however extensive he imagined the range of it to have been, in what is called, by a very doubtful mode of expression, “ the best of society.”

Hamilton, however, was not always in the humour to be either pleased or agreeable. Sometimes his temper was fretted by letters, which he was always impatiently expecting

sometimes by paragraphs in the London papers, which were regularly sent to him, at least it might be imagined so by the irritable haste with which he cut out the offending passages, and condemned them to the flames; and sometimes he suffered so severely from pain in his arm, occasioned by a fracture, received, as he said, in a fall from his horse, that not all his efforts could enable him to subdue his sense of anguish, the acuteness of which was sufficiently evident in his countenance to excite the commiseration of Catherine, who had additional motive of regret for his uneasiness, in the suspension it occasioned to their readings, which became every day a source of increasing gratification to her.

“ I am very sorry Colonel Hamilton was obliged to come into the country on account of his health,” said she to her father, one evening when he had been obliged to retire earlier than usual, “ but for my own sake, I shall

always be glad that he happened to come when he did. It is so fortunate for me that he should like just the same kind of reading that I do; and I can remember his remarks so well; he has such an animated manner, that they make quite an impression on my mind: I shall always be thinking of the books we have read together, when he is gone. He will begin the *Argonautics* with me to-morrow!—poor *Medea*! I know I shall pity her! Jason made a bad return to her for all her father's hospitality.—Which translation is the best, my dear father, Fawkes', or Preston's?"

She mounted the library steps as she spoke, to look for both, and Mr. Neville smiled, as she lingered over each before she descended; for it appeared to him only as yesterday since he was performing the very same office for Hamilton, which Hamilton was now undertaking for his daughter; and he never failed, when he found

him thus engaged in acting the part of preceptor, to rally him upon having a much more respectful and attentive pupil in Catherine, than he himself had ever been to her father.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WINTER'S WALK AT NOON.

THE sedentary amusements, however, of books, a game of chess, and a composition of Handel's, Boyce's, or some other old master, began gradually to admit of a little change, as the rigour of the winter yielded to the approach of spring. Catherine was accustomed to go out whenever the weather would permit her; and as Hamilton recovered strength he found it

impossible to see her return from her walks, her complexion glowing with exercise, and breathing freshness all around her, without wishing to share in them.

“ You never ask me to go any where with you,” said he, one day to her, as she came running to the glass, to put on her bonnet.

“ Because I have heard you say a hundred times,” said she, “ that you hate to stir beyond the gate—and besides,” she added, laughing, “ do not you remember, that when you first came, you charged me not to be too civil?”

“ And so to punish me for my fear that you should fatigue yourself that way, you resolved you would not be civil at all. But suppose, now, that I make a humble tender of my services as your escort, you will not reject them I hope.”

“ No,” said Catherine, “ I shall be most proud of them.” And accordingly the frogged

and braided great coat was brought out of the closet, where all the winter it had been left,

“ To dull forgetfulness a prey.”

and the gallant Colonel began to enclose in it his exceedingly handsome person.

“ I dare say you think this a very puppyish concern,” said he, seeing Catherine smile as he fastened the last strap, with a careless glance at the *tout ensemble*. “ Confess, now, that you do.”

“ No indeed,” said Catherine, “ I think it exceedingly handsome, and I like it extremely. I only smile at the idea of what others would think of it, that is the ploughmen and the crows, for we shall see nobody else.”

“ Well then, their clouted-shoe-ships may be very much obliged to me, for I shall frighten the crows away, for them, so they may carve their

furrows without fear of the corn being stolen out of them."

"Ah, that shall be added to the reprint of Sir Thomas Brown's 'Vulgar Errors,'" said Catherine, "I won't have my favorite 'sagacious people' the crows, libelled as thieves—they only follow the ploughmen to pick up the insects that would devour the grain themselves."

"Extremely considerate," said Hamilton, "particularly to the insects—but merit is always misunderstood. I never interfered in my life, to prevent mischief, that I was not accused directly of being the author of it."

Catherine laughingly condoled with him on the quantum of injustice which, in that case, he must have met with, and full of spirits, she led the way up to the heights of Castleberg. Arrived there, she made him pause, fearing that he might be fatigued, to look on the scene, which she was proud of shewing him for the

first time, though the sweet breath of spring had scarcely yet "unloosed the frost-bound soil," and here and there a patch of still unmelted snow contrasted its spotless white with the dark brown of a winter's fallow, or the tender green which was beginning to make its appearance in more sheltered situations; but on every naked spray a thousand gelid drops glittered to the sun-beams, and supplied the place of foliage, whilst the soft note of the wood-lark was occasionally heard, as if in emulation of the ploughboy's lengthened whistle. Hamilton looked on all around, with more pleasure than he had been sensible of for years before; but he had now, in addition to the gratification which even the most vitiated minds will at times unconsciously imbibe, from the calm contemplation of nature, a source of enjoyment more immediately associated with himself, in the delightful sensations of returning health; under the influence of which every

gale seemed redolent of sweets, every sound fraught with harmony.

“ I have not enjoyed a walk so much since I was your father’s pupil,” said he ; “ when I used to leap every stile and ditch I came to, with my head full of the Olympic Games, and my new hunter—”

“ I was sure you would be pleased,” said Catherine, “ when once you took the resolution to exert yourself ; as for me, I am never so happy, even in the depth of winter, as when I have gained this summit, and look down on all beneath me, with such delightful feelings of liberty.”

“ Oh you—but you are just the model for a Goddess of the Mountains ;” said Hamilton, raising, for a moment, an eye-glass splendidly mounted, and surveying her blooming countenance, and finely turned figure, as the fresh breeze lifted the curls from her forehead, and just played enough with her drapery to shew

every grace of her form to new advantage. Catherine slightly blushed under his gaze, but it expressed so little beyond mere critical examination, that the heightened colour was but for the instant.

“Do you see our village,” said she, “below to the left?”

“Ah, yes, I see the tower—”

“And the old oak beside it, I hope; for we are very proud of that oak, there are so few in Craven; indeed we call the ash the Craven oak. And there is the snug little Rectory, peeping from under the shelter of its branches; you see we are great people at Nethercross; not another slated roof in the place. My father says, rightly enough, anybody may be at the top of one circle, by descending a single step from the bottom of another.”

“Ah, yes! he is too wise to like the dregs of anything: but whose is that large house, of white stone, at the top of what I suppose, in

the summer, may be an avenue, but which now looks like double rows of gigantic, naked lances?"

"Oh that is Longcroft Hall, we visit the family very often; but we are a little *dreggy* there sometimes ourselves, when their titled neighbours are of the party; though Mr. Longcroft occasionally insinuates to my father, very obligingly, at such times, that he wishes always to see the clergy treated with respect in all their gradations. 'Church and State, Sir, Church and State' " he says, "'must be upheld together.' "

"Longcroft!" repeated Hamilton, "aye, I know him; a formal old gentleman enough! I remember he was always talking of his seat in Yorkshire. So that's the place.—Is he there now?"

"Yes; he always spends Christmas among his tenants. We dined there just before you came to us. His daughter is a very elegant

and accomplished young woman. I think you would be greatly pleased with her."

Hamilton bowed for the implied compliment, but thought to himself, that he did not come into the country to see those who passed for elegant and accomplished young women among their humble neighbours.

"Rattles through a concerto of Cramer's, I suppose, and sings something not English, that the good people fancy Italian, and dances a waltz by herself, and christens her grandmother's cotillions quadrilles, I shall take care to keep out of the way of these Longerofts; I want to know no more of them."

Whilst he made this resolution, Fate made another; for at that very moment Catherine exclaimed:—

"Ah, yonder is Edward Longeroft, with his dogs; how pretty they look running about, at the bottom of the hill!"

"Very pretty indeed! and so does the gentle

swain himself, with his gun over his shoulder : but as I am in no humour to make new acquaintance, do have the charity to let us take a circuitous route, and avoid the enemy."

"Very well, I dare say all parties will be quite as well pleased."

"Not *all* parties, I should suppose," said Hamilton, with that habitual gallantry which becomes a part of the very nature of a professed man of the world, "unless this Longcroft junior, has very early imbibed the prudent maxim,

"Where you cannot conquer, learn to fly."

"HE is flying now," said Catherine, laughing; "see how obligingly he takes the very opposite path to that which would bring him towards us."

"Ah, he is aware of the advantage we have

over him. Well, if ever I have to bring my regiment into Craven, I will take care to secure this exalted station for it; and then let the rebellious ones in the valley beware."

"Ah! if you had heard my poor grandmother describe the enthusiastic feeling that ran through all Craven, when Prince Charles Edward, the Pretender, sought shelter here, you would begin to think you were in the very country for chivalry and enterprize."

"I flatter myself I give a proof of thinking so, when I talk of bringing my regiment into it, you have no notion what a set of heroic figures it affords."

At that moment Edward Longcroft, suddenly striking out of a little copse, stood before them—he was going to address Catherine with the ease which many year's acquaintance gave him a right to assume towards her; but when his eye rested on Colonel Hamilton, an expression of surprise passed over his countenance,

and he merely took off his hat *en passant*, and walked on.—Catherine coloured, for she felt as if he had put a slight upon her, in the presence of Hamilton, but when she looked at her companion, she saw that he was thinking of any thing rather than of her; until recollecting himself, he said with an affectation of entire ignorance respecting him:—

“I presume that young man is the son of Mr. Longcroft.”

“No, he is only his nephew; but he is his acknowledged heir, and the world has given Miss Longcroft, his uncle’s only child, to him.”

“Yes, I suppose, the world of Craven is as considerate as the world of any other meridian, it finds out what would be convenient—and kindly converts it into the probable. But what does the doughty youth say to the arrangement? he looks as if he would make his own choice, in spite of the world, or his uncle, or his cousin into the bargain.”

“ Oh, I do not know ; he was always very fond of his cousin, and so he is still, I dare say ; but we do not see much of him now—he used to come to the Rectory very often, before my sister was married ; but the last two years he has seemed quite altered : his uncle is very proud, and I am afraid Edward is growing like him.”

These words brought them to the little gate, which opened on the lawn before the Rectory, and by the time he had entered the house, Hamilton found out, that, after all, walking in the country was a great bore.

“ One goes out,” said he to himself, “ without the hope of meeting a civilized being, and then is sure, at last, to stumble upon some blockhead that one would have gone ten miles to avoid.”

“ What a delightful walk we have had !” said Catherine, equally soliloquizing herself, “ how beautiful the country begins to look al-

ready! and then it is so pleasant to see a face one knows, in one's rambles! I am glad we met Edward Longcroft."

So much for the different frames of mind in which events, great or small, may be regarded, and the inferences deduced accordingly.

CHAPTER V.

MORNING CALLS.

NOTHING is more annoying to a spoiled child of fortune than to be thwarted in any point, however trifling, where he has made himself sure of having his own way. Hamilton was so mortified that Edward Longcroft, whom he knew much more of than he chose to acknowledge, should find him out in a nook of

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whatever time he pleased, lay aside a celebrity that had of late been somewhat troublesome to him, that the next day he resolved neither sunshine, nor southern breezes, nor ploughman's whistle, nor wood-lark's song, nor even Catherine's provoking air of healthful enjoyment should tempt him forth again.

“She is a lovely girl,” said he to himself, “and happy in being so cheaply and so innocently pleased—but she must scale the mountain top, or wander in the valley alone for me. It is rather too much of a joke to be seen playing the Corydon to my tutor's daughter! I should not exactly like such a proof of my taste to get to Lady Charlotte's ears.” How far his perceptions of shame were ill or well called forth the future must determine; for his meditations were put to flight, for the time being, by the entrance of the world where he had imagined he could, for

Catherine herself, who held in her hand a daffodil in full bloom.

“There,” said she, proffering it to him,
“there is a prize !

‘ Ask me why I bring you here,
The firstling of the infant year ? ’ ”

“ Ah ! ” said he, extending his hand, and taking it from hers with much the same sort of air which offended Hotspur, so greatly, in a ‘ certain Lord,’

“ Who held betwixt his finger and his thumb
A pouncet box, which ever and anon
He gave his nose, and took’t away again.”

“ This is indeed, one of the tribe—

“ That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.”

“ are there any more of the race so precocious ? ”

“ Come along with me,” said she, “ come

and look by the side of the little stream that runs through the garden."

"This girl, after all, can do whatever she likes with me," thought Hamilton, as he rose with affected effort, from the chair which he had just before vowed to himself nothing should induce him to stir from, until it was time to dress for dinner. Away they went to the brook, and found Mr. Neville standing there, looking at the daffodils with all the delight of the poet whose words were on his lips.

"I wandered lonely as a cloud,
That flits on high, o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of dancing daffodils.
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing near the trees.

Continuous as the stars that shine,
And twinkle in the milky way,
They stretched in never ending line,
Along the margin of a bay.
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee,
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company.
I gazed and gazed, but little thought,
What wealth to me the shew had brought.

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils."

Hamilton was so unused to hear Wordsworth quoted in any other tone than that of ridicule, or absurd parody, that he was amazed to hear his old tutor, whose taste he revered, not more from habit than experience of its correctness, repeat these lines with the enthusiasm of Catherine herself, and conclude them with a panegyric on their author, as having formed a new school in poetry, and finding

" Books in the running brooks."

Sermons in stones and good in ev'ry thing."

This was what Hamilton could not do; he could read the world—he was fond of analysing the human mind, as far as wordly conduct was affected by its peculiarities, and he loved the higher productions of it which he could bring within Lord Bacon's axiom, "That knowledge is power," but nature and solitude spoke to him in a dead language; and he might say of them as Johnson did of musical sounds, that he could scarcely say whether he was sensible of any effect at all from them; if he were, it was, he thought, a kind of melancholy—In short, he saw very little difference between Wordsworth's poetry, and Leigh Hunt's caricature of it when he speaks of,

" Some lines he had made on a straw,
Shewing where he had found it, and what it was for;
And how when 'twas balanced it stood like a spell;—
And how when 'twas balanced no longer it fell;—
A wild thing of scorn he described it to be;—
But said it was patient to heaven's decree,
Then he gazed upon nothing, and looking forlorn,
Dropt a natural tear for that wild thing of scorn.' "

“Well sir, what do you think of our daffodils?” said Mr. Neville, pointing to them exultingly, “are they not enough to inspire a poet?”

“I am not poet enough to answer the question,” said Hamilton, “but I remember the eldest of poets says they make very good salads.”

“Ah ha !” said Mr. Neville, “I am glad you have not forgot old Hesiod—true enough—I remember he says,

‘*Φίλταθ’ Ἀρμοδι, οὐ’ τι που τέθνηκας* κ τ. λ.’

that is to say, Miss Catherine, ‘few are aware of the virtue that may lie in such humble repasts as the mallow and the daffodil can offer.’ I rather think, however, we shall find a receipt for daffodil wine in our manuscript collection of a ‘Hundred Notable Things,’ though I believe it does not pretend to be from quite such high authority—but, however, I did not think

of getting into Greek, when I quoted Wordsworth."

"Nor I of hearing any thing like common sense spring out of a quotation from him," said Hamilton. "Not but that all he says may be very fine, but I am of another school—I am a Byronian—he is the only man that is read in Town—those Lakists that go and make faces at themselves on the waveless waters, and then run home to put their reflections upon paper are quite out-voted now; even the ladies never think of them."

"No, I suppose not," said Mr. Neville, "any more than they would think of seeing hay-makers in their verandas, or a sheep shearing in their drawing-rooms. But 'the children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light,' and he who sings of nothing but lawless crimes, and sated vices, does wisely to address his song to the inhabitants of an overgrown and luxurious metropolis."

“ Yes, yes; he is sure enough of sympathy, plenty of dancing daffodils there,—only of rather an opposite species. What do you say Miss Neville, do you like the titled Bard ?”

“ Quite well enough, as a poet, to wish he had made choice of better subjects. Edward Longcroft says he has in him a fragment of almost every other poet’s distinguishing excellence, but unfortunately his own genius is only a fragment itself, and, therefore, he produces nothing but fragments after all.”

“ Very wise in Mr. Longcroft—I dare say he could prove every thing he says most mathematically; but I fancy he will find the generality of his acquaintance admire diamond sparks more than brick-bats—though one is only a part, and the other a whole.”

“ Very good ! very good !” said Mr. Neville, “ but who have we here ?” he added, as he looked towards the little gate. “ Ah ha ! here he is himself—now we can have diamond sparks

versus brick-bats, as long as you like, and see who has the better of the argument."

It was indeed Edward Longcroft and his cousin Louisa. Catherine flew to meet them, and held out her hand to each, Louisa seized it with the utmost cordiality; but Edward scarcely touched the tips of her fingers, and she withdrew them, somewhat indignantly; convinced that he was actually become quite as proud as his uncle, and would soon be as disagreeable.

"What a pity it is that people should alter so!" This reflection was made in the moment that bows were exchanging between the Longcrofts and Hamilton, who was introduced to them, by Mr. Neville, as his particular friend, but who having his own private reasons for not wishing to extend his acquaintance just then, put on a look of polite indifference, which was amply returned by Edward Longcroft, and went into the house, as soon as he could, without

positive rudeness, withdraw himself from the party. Now this was somewhat provoking, as Hamilton was right enough in imagining himself the magnet which had drawn the Longcrofts to the Rectory that morning; though he was not altogether as correct in ascertaining their motives. To such of our readers as may be unfortunate enough to know nothing about the hospitality which increases in this kingdom exactly in the proportion to the distance that those who may require its aid are travelling northward from the metropolis, it may not be amiss to give the information, that in the district of Craven, where we have already described the Rectory of Nethercross to be situated, it is the laudable custom of the inhabitants, on the arrival of a stranger at any of the villages which are so thickly scattered over its beautiful vallies, immediately to shew their neighbourly consideration and regard by inviting the family with whom he may be taking up

his abode ; and thus giving themselves, in turn, an equal claim upon a similar act of kindness, whensoever they may require it for their guests.

Louisa Longcroft, though moving in the most fashionable circles in London, never thought of augmenting her consequence in the country by airs of superiority over any one ; and least of all over the Nevilles, whom she thoroughly esteemed not only for their own sakes, but also for the sake of Mrs. Neville, whose remembrance was inseparably associated in her mind with that of her own mother, whose “school-day friendship” with her had matured into an esteem which continued unabated till her death. No sooner, therefore, did Edward mention having met Colonel Hamilton with Catherine, the day before, than Louisa proposed to go directly to the Rectory, to invite the whole party to spend a day at the Hall, her father agreed to it, partly from respect to the antique hospitality of the district,

and partly from knowing him to be the presumptive heir to the Earldom of Winterdale—and Edward offered to accompany his cousin, not less from habitual attention to her than from certain feelings respecting Hamilton, which he was not very fond of analysing to himself, and took good care not to communicate to any other person.

“Why have not we seen you at the Hall,” said Louisa to Catherine—“I thought you would be glad to come to us when your sister left you.”

“And so I should, but I have scarcely had time even to miss her—for Colonel Hamilton came to us the very day after she went away, and he has been till very lately so entirely confined to the house, that I have been kept always occupied, in one way or other about him.”

“Aye,” said Mr. Neville, “an awkward business that arm of his—but however he is getting quite well now—and I hope it will all

be for his good. A very clever man, and a warm-hearted man, too; naturally—but the world, the world! oh'dear! we are all well off that are not within its vortex.”

“I dont know that,” said Edward—“A man, may contrive to drown himself in a horse-pond as well as in the sea—The world will not destroy native rectitude, any more than the fire will scorch a salamander.”

“Yet the poor salamander runs round and round,” said Catherine, “as if it knew its danger.”

“And therein consists its safety,” said Edward, “for if it did not know that, it would run at once into the flames—I should never be uneasy for the welfare of any one who, I saw, was aware of the existence of danger.” He spoke those words in a tone of agitation unusual with him—his cousin looked towards him with some surprise; and Catherine again thought “how very odd he grew,” but her

father who was often reminded of things by their opposites, cried out,—

“Now we talk of salamanders, look at the bottom of this old stump, and you will see the nest of dormice I shewed you in the beginning of winter—this warm sun has made them begin to peep about them again!”

After a turn or two round the garden they all returned to the house, where they found Hamilton apparently very busy with a volume of Gibbon: but secretly tired of playing the student alone, and not at all sorry for an opportunity of again exhibiting the civil *ennui* which he was very fond of displaying, when he did not feel his vanity roused to any more active excitement of attention.

After half-an-hour's chat, which Hamilton found could be carried on very well, even though he had the cruelty to refrain from taking any share in it. The Longerofts took their leave, with a promise from the Nevilles

that they would fix an early day for their visit to the Hall.

The door was no sooner closed, than Hamilton throwing himself back in his chair, said "I suppose it would be deemed a crying sin ever to say 'not at home,' to any of the good people who walk three or four miles to make a morning call, and then require as many hours to rest themselves; but I think I should sometimes sport oak, if I found myself in danger of being besieged so unmercifully."

"Do you mean that you would take a cudgel to them?" said Catherine, laughing.

"No my dear," explained her father, "to sport oak, is to keep out the vulgar; as Horace says, '*Procul este profani*;' in plain English to shut the door—but Colonel Hamilton forgets that one great privilege of living in the country is, that we need only form intimacies with those we like. We do not say 'at home' to a hundred people we care nothing about, any more

than we should think of saying not 'at home' to friends who we really conceive shew their good-will by taking the trouble to come to see us."

"Ah! my dear sir, you must forgive me—I shall never be what your lessons ought long ago to have made me—unless Catherine will take me in hand. I have learned a great deal from her already, and the more she teaches me, the better I shall be for it."

This was precisely the kind of compliment to touch the feelings of her to whom it was addressed; and as she raised her eyes to him, to see if he were in earnest, when he uttered it, they beamed with such undisguised pleasure that he wondered their soft yet stedfast brilliancy had not before struck him as uncommonly beautiful.

"That Master Longcroft might well draw up his head," thought he to himself, "and measure me from head to foot, and then look into her

very eyes, as if he would see whether I had made any impression upon her fancy."

Few men would have needed any other inducement to admire Catherine Neville than the daily opportunity of witnessing her native graces, and the thousand amiable qualities which unconsciously rendered her the delight of all who came within her influence. But unfortunately Hamilton had lived so long in the world, that he never thought of admiring any thing for its own sake; and a single glance from Edward Longcroft, the heir-apparent to the greatest landed property in the district, had given Catherine more importance in a moment, in his eyes, than all her own attractions, and the attentions she had paid him as her father's guest, had done during the two months he had been under the same roof with her.

"And so you admire the Longcroft's amazingly," said he to Catherine, when they were alone.

“Yes, I admire them both exceedingly,” said she; “my father says Edward is a most elegant scholar—and as for Lonisa, I should be very ungrateful if I did not admire her, and love her too; for she has taken great pains with me—what little French I know, is entirely of her teaching; and even in my music, though my father grounded me pretty well, in the theory, yet I owe all the fingering, and execution of any difficult passage to her.”

“Oh yes! and most likely your fine ear, and flexible voice, and your correct taste, are all given by her—But what makes her, and her *inamorato* look so solemn? do they always wrap themselves up in such awful majesty?”

“Louisa is always rather serious, and so indeed is Edward—but I never saw him look so grave as he did this morning.”

“Except yesterday morning; when I think he exhibited much the same degree of amiability in his countenance.”

“Well, do not let us abuse our neighbours, as soon as their backs are turned; that does not come at all within my system of either teaching or learning—so I shall run away and feed my chickens.”

“No, no;” cried Hamilton, catching her hand to detain her.—“stay, and give me some music—‘Acis and Galatea,’ that very soul of pastoral romance— I will be your Polypheme.”

“How modest; and pray what will you do Mr. Polypheme?”

“I will drive away your Acis,” said he, and he began,—

“Die ! presumptuous Acis, die !”

Catherine laughed, but she blushed a little too; and sitting down to the piano, commenced the delightful air,—

“Heart, thou seat of soft delight,
Be thou now a fountain bright.”

Whilst they were in the middle of it, Hamil-

ton could not help wondering how it happened that he invariably felt wearied and *distract*, at the opera, and the Harmonics, and Philharmonics in London ; and yet listened with such pleasure in Craven to the

“ Native wood notes wild.”

which he began to think, at any rate as warbled by Catherine, more favourable to melody, than all the execution which, in awakening that kind of admiration that is born of wonder, puts to flight the chaster offspring of taste and feeling.

“ You are so fond of music,” said Catherine, when she had finished, “ you must be, or you would not be able to bear mine, after what you hear in London ;—such delightful concerts !—and then the orchestras at the theatres !—concerts in themselves.—And the Opera ! oh how charming it is ! I went once, when I was in Town with my sister, after her marriage. I

did not get it out of my head for weeks after. That lovely Catalani! in *Il Clemenza di Tito*—and then the beautiful Ballet of Cupid and Psyche,—how pretty it is where the Graces teach Psyche to dance, and she instantly dances a thousand times more gracefully than themselves.—I can see it all this moment!”

Hamilton smiled at her animation.

“Ah Catherine!” he exclaimed, “you are an enviable being. With you it is always *once*; that expressive word, so significative of novelty, of zest, of every thing that makes life delightful! I would give half my income, nay, half my life to come, if I could say *once*, with the same feelings that you do.”

The little gate swung again upon its hinges, he looked up—“Heaven give me patience!” he exclaimed.

“For *once*,” said Catherine.

“Why Catherine, it is your levee-day—who have we here? I positively cannot stand another

morning call." He started up to make his exit, but ere he could effect it he was nearly run against by William Brayswick, who rushed into the room, whilst his sister Fanny was taking off her clogs in the passage.

"Well, Miss Neville, how do you do? I told Fanny I would have the first shake of the hand," he started back on seeing Hamilton, who was just escaping by the glass-door, that opened on the lawn. Fanny entered the minute after.

"Well Catherine dear! how glad I am to see you again;" and she kissed her, before she saw any one else in the room. The sight of a stranger in an instant checked her buoyancy, and she looked as demure as her brother; whilst Catherine, after affectionately returning her salute, introduced the parties to each other.

"Colonel Hamilton, my dear Fanny—Miss Brayswick, sir,—Mr. William Brayswick."

The Colonel made an obeisance the very ultra of profound, and the next moment swung out at the glass door.

“ My gracious ! Catherine ! what a singular looking man ! ” exclaimed Fanny. “ What makes him go away ? Where does he come from ? ”

“ Singular looking man ! ” exclaimed Catherine, in return. “ That is a very singular expression to apply to such a man as Colonel Hamilton ! ”

“ Oh, is that Colonel Hamilton, that your father used to talk of so often ? Well my dear, I do think he is rather singular looking, he has such immense eyes.”

“ Immense ! ” repeated Catherine again,—
“ no, my dear Fanny, they are not immense ; they are large certainly, but I think eyes can scarcely be too large, particularly if they be dark, like his ; they are so much softer then, in their expression.”

Unfortunately, poor William Brayswick's eyes were small, and of a light blue; and this open avowal of admiring another colour was not calculated to do away the alarm he had already conceived at the style of Hamilton's head, the cut of his coat, and the confirmed though careless air of fashion which pervaded his whole person. His uncomfortable feelings were augmented when, after his sister had answered Catherine's questions, respecting her return, and her grand-mother's health, and the manner in which she had spent her time whilst visiting her, she, in her turn, interrogated Catherine as to what her employments had been, and received always the same answer; always something in which the name of Colonel Hamilton was somehow or other concerned.

"Do you intend to go to the assembly, to-morrow, Catherine?" at last Fanny asked.

"I did not know there was to be one."

"Not know? What have you forgotten that

there always is one on the twenty-fourth?— Well, that is strange, how you could forget *that*. I met Mr. Pugh just now, and he made himself sure I should be there.”

Mr. Pugh was the village apothecary, and every one who has lived in a village knows very well that the apothecary, particularly if he be a single man, is generally a personage of great importance among the ladies. Catherine, however, scarcely saw the blush which passed over Fanny’s round and dimpled cheek, at the mention of his name; for she was weighing in her mind her disinclination to go to the assembly, against her unwillingness to disappoint Fanny, who she was afraid had relied upon her going with her.

“ I should be so sorry,” thought she, “ now that Colonel Hamilton’s stay may be so short, to waste a whole evening in that manner— just too, when we are in the middle of that beautiful description of Medea’s dream about

Jason—and yet poor Fanny! she is so fond of dancing, and the assemblies come so seldom!” The little dispute in Catherine’s mind between what she wished to do, and what she felt ought to be done, sought refuge, as disputes of more importance generally do, in compromise.

“ I shall be sorry if you will be disappointed to hear that I am not going;” said she, “ but I dare say Mrs. Mason will be there, and I will call, if you like, to ask her to take you.”

“ Oh, but I don’t like Miss Mason—she is always so cross, and she does nothing but find fault with everybody’s dress, and I’m sure she needn’t, for she’s always fright enough herself. No, if I can’t go with you, I had rather not go at all—I do so like to sit next you at tea, too—I never enjoy any thing half so much with any body else.” This affectionate appeal was not lost upon Catherine; she hesitated, but William Brayswick undid all, by saying, in a tone of rebuke.

“Well sister, but if Miss Neville has more agreeable company at home, you ought not to think only of what you like.”

It was the first time in his life, that William Brayswick had ever said any thing that produced a sensation in Catherine Neville, though he had for the last two or three years been very sedulously endeavouring to do so; she now however, looked upon him with wonder, that any thing he could say had point enough in it for her to wish it unsaid; nevertheless, to alter her resolution of staying at home in consequence, would, she felt, be annexing much too great a degree of importance to it; she therefore calmly repeated, that she was sorry it should happen so; and poor Fanny, hopeless of any further success, arose to take her leave: Catherine went with her as far as the gate; Colonel Hamilton was walking up and down the gravel walk with Mr. Neville, and Fanny, regarding him as the cause of her dis-

appointment, turned her head angrily away, to avoid meeting what she termed, his immense eyes, the expression of which did not appear at all improved, either to her or her brother, under the idea that it was to amuse him, that Catherine staid away from the assembly.

Dinner was brought in as soon as Fanny went away ; and Catherine took her seat at the head of the table, with a countenance so much graver than usual, that her father instantly remarked it.

“ Why Catherine, what’s the matter—have you and my little sweetheart been pulling caps ? I thought she looked somewhat out of sorts.”

Catherine explained.

“ Poor Fanny ! said Mr. Neville—“ It is certainly a trial to a young lady of nineteen, to stay at home, when a dance is in question ; particularly as we have not much of that sort of thing going on hereabouts—only four in the

year, I believe—Aye! bless me; yes, sure enough, to-morrow's the day—how quickly the months come round! I met Mr. Pugh, now I think of it, and he asked me if we should not be there: and by the bye that's another addition to the grievance—Why Fanny's in love with Mr. Pugh, is she not?"

"My dear Father!" exclaimed Catherine, blushing, as proxy for her friend—"you should not say so—Mr. Pugh may be in love with her, if you please."

"Oh that's the thing is it—well! well!—I knew there was a little love on one side or other, I don't rightly understand which; but it is a very proper distinction, no doubt—though you know Lord Lyttleton says:—

"A maid unasked may own a well-placed flame,
Not loving first, but loving wrong's the shame."

"Well, that is loving wrong, in my opinion;

my Lord Lyttleton and I do not agree on that subject."

"What," said her father, "you like Milton's notion better—you would have the ladies know the value of their worth—

"That would be wooed, and not unsought be won."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hamilton, "how pure, how just that is! It is as true in doctrine, as it is beautiful in poetry; he is very right—all that is really valuable must be sought for."

"Yes," said Mr. Neville, "the finest stones are hidden in the earth; and by the bye," turning to Hamilton, "that reminds me of the metallic spar we were talking about; I have been applying the acid on tin, and I think I have got the effect—I will shew it to you when the cloth is taken away."

This led to a long discussion on the theory of lights and colours, and crystallizations, and

petrifications; during which, Catherine again ruminated on the assembly, again blamed herself for having disappointed Fanny of going; and then began to fear that her own absence might be more commented on than she had at first imagined—"I think I will go to the assembly too, papa, to-morrow," said she.

"I think you had better, my dear," he replied, holding up a small phial as he spoke, with a piece of zink in it, on which he was making an experiment—she looked towards Hamilton, he understood the appeal.

"I hope you do not, for a moment," said he, "hesitate on my account—I should be quite uncomfortable if I once began to think myself an obstacle to any arrangements you would make if I were altogether out of the question."

Hamilton had a pretty good guess, that if Catherine merely consulted her inclination, it would not, just at that time, take her to the

village assembly, even though it were the last of the season ; and it was this very conjecture that made him not unwilling for her to go.

“ Perhaps you will go too ? ” said she.

“ I am obliged to you, but you must excuse me.” And he spoke in a tone so cold and decided, as if it was a thing not to be for a moment expected ; insomuch that Catherine coloured, and wished she had not paid him the compliment, as she termed it to herself, of asking him.

“ It would be mighty entertaining,” thought he, “ for a man like me to go among a set of cherry-cheeked girls, and flaxen-headed youths, and dance in a room over a stable, and hand negus about, with slices of lemon swimming in it, and call for hot rolls and butter at tea—It may all do very well for Mr. Pugh, who can put his partners to stand in a draught of air, and may amuse himself with calculating how many sore throats, and coughs he will get on his list by it ; but I shall contrive to make my-

self tolerably happy at home ;” and as he inwardly settled this tirade, an air of ineffable complacency stole over his handsome features, under the idea, that Catherine would all the evening be wishing herself at home too ; quietly working her hearth-rug by the fire, with her favourite kitten at her feet ; whilst he read the ‘ Argonautics ’ to her, in the poetical translation of Fawkes, and elucidated the beauties of his subject with comments, always listened to by her with a sweet and earnest attention, which abundantly repaid him for the pains he took to improve a mind so susceptible of cultivation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VILLAGE ASSEMBLY.

THE next morning, Catherine was busy in preparing her dress for the evening ; she therefore spent most of it in her own room ; as she found she could not get the trimming completed without the assistance of Margaret. She had sent to let Fanny Brayswick know that she would be ready for her by eight o'clock ; and had received a note from her in return, full of

such grateful acknowledgement, and declarations of delight, as sufficiently rewarded her for the force she had put upon her own inclinations in going.

Colonel Hamilton found himself somewhat solitary amidst all this preparation and arrangement; he therefore sought to beguile the time till dinner, by a ramble through the same valleys, and over the same hills that he had before explored with Catherine; but he missed at every step her playful remarks, or more serious reflections; and as the wind blew freshly over the boughs that were just beginning to put forth their first tender green, he longed to see how it would have played with her "brownie locks," and heightened the colour upon her peach-like cheek.

When he returned to the house he found that the Longcrofts had been there, to ask Catherine to accompany them to the assembly.

"They desired I would take Fanny too,"

said she, "they are always so kind and considerate: and I am very glad they did call, because now my father will not be obliged to go to take care of us; so he can stay at home with you, Colonel; and you can have a good game at chess together; without fear of my disturbing you, by asking questions, or giving you advice."

When Hamilton had, with so much gravity, declined going to the assembly, he was thinking very little of playing at chess with Mr. Neville, and still less of giving Edward Longcroft an opportunity of paying attention to Catherine unrivalled and unobserved. Men of the world, however, can always get themselves out of such scrapes, by easy assurance, as they plunge themselves into by waywardness, or impatience.

"No, indeed," said he, "I will keep no one at home, to play at chess with me—I will stay by myself, and play at patience."

"Ah!" said Catherine, "I wish I could see

you—how *impatiently* you will play, and you will lift up the cards, and cheat yourself; I am sure you will never have resolution enough to play fairly !”

“ Well then, I will go to this famous ball with you, and then I shall have some chance of keeping myself honest.”

“ And of playing at patience too ;” said Catherine, laughing; but without the slightest idea that he had any intention of going,—though when she stood before the glass, and saw how well she looked in a dress of pale blue crape, trimmed with white roses, and her head ornamented with a delicate pearl spray, a present from Louisa Longcroft, she could not help thinking it a little unfortunate, that perhaps, the only time when she had any chance of looking at all like the women of fashion, on whose elegance and grace he had so often expatiated, he would merely see her for a moment, as she went into the room to wish him good

evening. That moment, however, would have been quite enough, to decide him even if he had not before fixed his resolution—for to combine any thing of vulgarity, or ridiculousness with an amusement in which such a figure as stood before him was going to partake, was impossible.

“ I certainly will make one in the throng,” thought he, “ but I shall not put myself under the wing of their high mightinesses, the Longcrofts. I shall just check-mate my good old friend, and then get him to introduce me to the master of the ceremonies, Mr. Pugh, I suppose. It will be excellent to see him feeling all the ladies’ pulses, as he marshalls them in the dance.”

Accordingly, to the great surprize of Fanny Brayswick, and the great consternation of her brother, and great pleasure of Catherine, and great amazement of all the room besides, excepting the Longcrofts, who very rarely indeed felt the force of that sort of

wonder which has been defined “the effect of novelty upon ignorance,” just before the dancing commenced, in walked the Colonel, leaning upon Mr. Neville’s arm, and attracting as much attention by his chapeau-bras, as he had before done by his great-coat. A very cold bow of recognition passed between him and the Longcrofts; he then stepped up to Catherine, and said to her, *sotto voce*, “You see what you can do! You are in conscience bound to dance with me, since you have drawn me here.”

“If that would make any amends to you for the exertion of coming, I would gladly do so, if it were in my power; but unfortunately I am engaged already.”

She looked towards Edward Longcroft, as she spoke; and though it was the thing most to be expected, that he should have solicited her hand for the first two dances, even if it had been merely out of civility to her, as his cousin’s friend, yet Hamilton was unjust enough to feel

offended, that she had not waited for him; when, in fact, she knew nothing of his intention to be there. He, however, did not trust himself with any expression of ill humour, beyond what he could convey in a scornful elevation of the eyebrows, and a careless gaze round the room; taking care to throw as much apathy and disgust into his countenance as he could render intelligible to the meanest capacity. It could not escape the observation of her whom it was meant to make uncomfortable; yet she forgave him.

“It is, to be sure,” thought she “so different a scene from all that he has ever been accustomed to.”—And whilst making this reflection she was led to her place by Edward Longcroft, whose cheek was yet blanched with the variety of feelings which Hamilton’s up-raised eyebrow had excited in his breast.

Hamilton himself, meanwhile, was left in solitary dignity, to ruminate by the fire-side;

for Mr. Neville had joined a whist table, with the lawyer and the banker, and Mr. Pugh the elder ; whose son was, as Hamilton had rightly guessed, the master of the ceremonies, and had, as in duty bound, skipped up to him, perceiving that he was standing still, and offered to procure him a partner ; but the cold entreaty, that he would not trouble himself, sent him back again to his place, with a countenance somewhat elongated by his failure of doing the agreeable ; and he had changed sides, and back again, and danced down the middle and up again, with his smiling partner, two or three times, to the tune of “money in both pockets,” before he felt quite reinstated in the dignity of his official capacity.

Hamilton, meanwhile, could not but be entertained at his own situation, as he threw a careless glance around the room, which, though not literally over a stable, was yet not far removed from one ; being in the principal Inn in

the place, and consequently subjected to the noise of all the coaches, and carts, and horsemen, and footmen that resorted to it.—What a contrast did its walls, and tallow candles, and three fiddlers, and long wooden benches covered with faded cloth, present to the elegant ball-rooms, the silken hangings, adorned with wreaths of flowers, the alabaster vases, the transparencies, the chalked floors, the luxurious ottomans, the sounding orchestras he had so lately left; and wherein he had been accustomed to guide the brightest luminaries of fashion, through the mazes of the quadrille, or support them in the yet more enchanting movements of the waltz! And what a contrast—and stranger still to him, was it to find in the scene before him, an air of heartfelt enjoyment, and cordial familiarity, which he vainly endeavoured to recollect having witnessed in the more brilliant assemblages he had been recalling to his memory; but what surprised him

most of all was, to see Miss Longcroft, who was used to as good society as that in which he prided himself, on being one of the leaders, sitting with an air of perfect contentment, in conversation with a young man whose "customary suit of solemn black," somewhat rusty with wear, proclaimed him to be, in all probability, the curate of some adjacent village; whilst Catherine herself danced like Terpsichore, the attraction of every eye, and perfectly satisfied with an admiration, which to her made up by sincerity for what it might want in refinement.

Before he had accounted for these singularities, the first dance was ended, and he derived a temporary feeling of pleasure from the thought, that Catherine would, for a few minutes at least, in all likelihood resume her seat beside him. He was however disappointed: the place was taken up by Fanny Brayswick, who threw herself into it, panting and fanning

herself, with a countenance so full of Mr. Pugh, that Hamilton could not even seek consolation in his vanity by thinking that she had any other motive for choosing a seat so near him, but simply that it was the first she saw vacant.

And now began indeed the full force, or rather agony of contrast; instead of the elegant refinements of fashionable conversation; the mysterious intimation, the covert reply, the bolder avowal, the affected rebuke, the *bon mot*, the repartee, the *ben trovate*, he was condemned to listen to all the whispering and laughing about nothing, the for shames! and oh dears! the giggling and blushing that constitute, with young ladies in the country, between sixteen and twenty, the very essence of wit and gaiety.

“ Well, Miss Brayswick, why I declare you look quite blue, I’m afraid you are cold !”

“ La, now, Mr. Pugh, I’m sure now you

mean red, and I dare say I am a fine figure, it is so hot !”

“ No, surely you don’t think so,—I was just going to ask if I might bring you a little fire on your fan.”

This was a standing joke with Mr. Pugh, who never failed to avail himself of it, so long as the fire itself afforded him an opportunity,—and Fanny as constantly delighted him with laughing, and telling him that he might bring it in his pocket, as she could not spare her fan.

It was too much for Hamilton’s nerves—he started up, and strode across the room towards Catherine, who was sitting with her partner near Miss Longcroft and the gentleman in the rusty coat, when his attention was suddenly arrested by a head, with a very long nose attached to it, which popped itself into the door, without introducing any more of the body thereunto belonging than the shoulders, and exclaimed :—

“Ah! is it you, Hamilton! and in this nook of the world? I might have looked to all eternity for you on the Continent.”

“And you too, Halston!” he said, “we may well be surprised to see one another in such a place as this.”

The head and body of the first speaker now came forth from the other side of the door, and presented altogether a person of fashionable appearance—that is to say, cut in at the waist, and stuffed out at the shoulders—an enormous cravat, and every hair on the head twisted in a way exactly different from what nature had intended. After he had shaken hands with Hamilton, they retired together: about an hour afterwards, a chaise-and-four dashed off from the Inn, and Hamilton returned to the assembly; his consequence much increased in the eyes of the waiters and landlord, by his intimacy with the gentleman who had taken a

chaise-and-four all to himself, and evidently in much better humour with every thing around him.

The company were just sitting down to tea, and he not only condescended to take his place among them, but even to pour out the coffee, and hand the hot rolls, with a grace that induced many to accept them, solely that they might boast of the attention they had received from Mr. Neville's elegant visitor. He likewise entered into conversation with Edward Longcroft, informing him of the latest news, which his friend Mr. Halston had brought from Town, and repeated it to Mr. Dacres, Miss Longcroft's partner; whom he now discovered to be, not merely a village curate, but also, a gentleman of very prepossessing appearance and address. Fanny Brayswick and her brother, and Mr. Pugh himself, all came in for a share of his attentions; and Catherine was delighted to see

her own admiration of him gradually pervade the whole circle in which he so graciously condescended to appear agreeable.

There was only to be one more dance after tea; and for that one Hamilton solicited the hand of Catherine, with more fear of finding her engaged than he was willing to acknowledge to himself. He obtained it however; for in fact she had reserved it for him; and as he led her to the top of the room, he was conscious of more actual pleasure than he recollected ever to have derived from the most flattering attentions of the belles of Almack's, where, in spite of its avowed exclusiveness, a perpetual search after novelty sufficiently proves that the members are not, amid all their variety, in actual possession of any thing that suffices for enjoyment.

Just as they had reached the bottom of the dance Mr. Neville was coming out of the card-room, buttoning up his purse, with two additi-

onal half-crowns in it, the earnings of his evening's recreation. Hamilton took him by the arm, and, turning him half round, communicated something in his ear, which evidently imparted no small degree of satisfaction to the worthy Rector; who, unused to conceal any thing he felt, shook him by the hand, saying—"God be thanked! How happy you must feel—it relieves me greatly.—But, my dear boy, let it be a lesson to you. What a miserable man you might have made of yourself, at least if you are the man I take you to be."

He shook him again by the hand, as he concluded, with an emotion that affected Hamilton, whose heightened colour, and moistened eye, caught Catherine's attention; and she looked at him with such enquiring, though unconscious earnestness, as instantly brought him to her side again, and as instantly drove Edward Longcroft away from it.

How strange a sympathy there is in human

souls ! how mysterious the study it might afford ! Hamilton spoke not to Catherine—she knew not the nature of the communication between him and her father—she had not even the remotest idea of it ; yet was he assured, as he sate by her side, that she entered into all his feelings, and that all her own happiness was the reflection of that which beamed in his countenance.

CHAPTER VII.

A COTTAGE SCENE.

FOR some days after the ball, if the meeting at the King's Arms might be honoured with so dignified an appellation, Colonel Hamilton entered upon every thing around him with new feelings. Not Catherine herself was more ready for a walk in the morning, or her father for a philosophical experiment after dinner, or both of them together for Purcell and Corelli

in an evening—It was impossible for Catherine to be insensible of the pleasure which such a companion diffused over the Rectory.—Her father had loved Hamilton as a son, and in the retirement under which he now contemplated him, he saw only the same blameless vivacity, and noble warmth of feeling which had characterised him when a boy. Whilst Catherine, whose elegant tastes and highly cultivated intellect were only rarely excited, even for a moment, in the sequestered and monotonous life to which her father's studious habits, and limited circle of acquaintance subjected her, felt as if a new sun had risen on her hitherto narrow, though cloudless horizon. To detain a man like Hamilton so long in comparative solitude might have flattered the vanity of any woman, but in Catherine it excited a better feeling—it made her think well of him, rather than of herself.

“He cannot be much hurt by the world,”

she would say, “if he can be contented so long out of it—and then how fond he is of my father!—it must be a good heart that retains so warmly the affections of its youth, after so many years’ separation from their object.”

Mr. Neville had taken great pains to cultivate his daughter’s understanding, and teach her to value mental excellence; but he had likewise invariably impressed upon her, that the qualities of the heart are far beyond those of the head, with reference both to their influence on the individual, and on those around him. Catherine, therefore, was much happier when she discovered a good feeling in Hamilton, than a brilliant thought. Sometimes she felt a sweet consciousness that he was indeed all the better for the time he had passed with her; and this conviction converted their *tête-à-tête* walks into a series of familiar ethics, playful on both sides, but delightful to each; for Hamilton himself felt, when he saw her counte-

nance lighten up, with all the triumph of generous sentiment, or listened to her voice, naturally soft and melodious, and still more so when her sensibility betrayed itself in the exquisite modulation of its tones, that if any thing can reclaim a man whose perceptions of excellence have been early vitiated by the world, it is the society of an amiable and intelligent woman, in whom refinement of pursuits is accompanied with simplicity of habits.

One morning Catherine and Hamilton came, in their walks, to a pretty cottage with the inhabitants of which Catherine was well acquainted, and whose thatched roof had often been a landmark to her from some eminence, as the smoke rose from its chimney, above the little orchard in which it stood. Her attention was immediately arrested by a small cart at the door, containing a bed, covered with a patchwork quilt, and other articles of household furniture.

“What is all this about!” she exclaimed, “I’m afraid I’m going to lose an old neighbour;” and instantly she entered, with all the ease of one assured of welcome. Hamilton instinctively followed her, not without admiration at himself, for the submission with which he waited on the steps of a country girl, who did not even seem to consider him of sufficient consequence to require an apology, for interrupting him in his walk.

“Why Alice! What is the matter?” exclaimed Catherine, at the same time extending her arms for an infant, which was sleeping on its mother’s breast. “How is your husband? Are you going away? What are your things packed up for?”

Alice burst into tears—“Hav’nt you heard, Miss, that John was ballotted for a soldier, six weeks sin, and was forced to gang to Hull, to join ’um?”

Catherine blushed, for she felt that for the

last six weeks her father's poor parishioners had come much seldomer into her mind than during any former period of her acquaintance with them.

"No," she said, "I never heard a word of it. This pretty little creature has been born then since he went away; and you about again so soon!"

"Yes, Miss, I'mun stir mysel', but God knows what'll become of us; for Mr. Longcrofts's steward says, I shall niver be able to manage bit o' ground by mysen; and he says, if I leaves quiet like, he'll allow me some'at out of crops for this year; but if I don't he'll strain for rent, and mak' me put every thing in repair besides; and so I'mun leave my poor homestead, and my bairns, poor things, mun gang about warld like fatherless ones as they are."

Catherine's eyes filled with tears, at the sight of the mother's lip, quivering as she

spoke, and, to conceal them she turned round to a fine chubby boy, who was keeping guard over a fat pig, which was tied by the leg ; and as he stood twisting the string in his fingers, it was easy to see that his sorrow for his mother's grief, was very nearly balanced by his joy at being entrusted to drive the recent tenant of the sty along the road, to his grandmother's, where all the little troops of emigrants were going to seek a temporary shelter : a pretty little girl, six years old, was kneeling beside a basket of chickens, putting down the crested heads, which ever and anon popped through the interstices of the cabbage-net that confined them in their wicker prison ; and a terrier dog, with one foot lifted from the ground, as if ready to obey the first signal to depart, gazed wistfully in the face of his mistress, in order to penetrate her designs ; whilst the cat, regarding herself as a fixture, remained seated on the hearth, with half-closed eyes, in immoveable gravity ; which

would not condescend to be diverted, even by the gambols of her kitten, that frolicked round her ; free, for a time at least, from the tormenting caresses of the children, whose play thing it had been fated from its birth to become.

“ Capital subject for Wilkie,” thought Hamilton, “ too *sombre* though ! wants a little touch of the humourous ; that ‘ Distraining for Rent,’ was too solemn for John Bull—he could not look at it without putting his hand in his pocket to pay the bailiff.”

Whilst he thus clasped the miseries of life and the fine arts together, Catherine’s hand was wandering towards her purse, for she had asked Alice if she had not heard from her husband since he went away ; and the reply went to her heart.

“ Oh yes Miss, I’s vary vary sure he would write—but poor folk can’t afferd post-letters ; if there was one for me at post-office, I couldn’t

lay out a shilling in *loosing* it, when my bairns have no' but me to look to, for bread."

"I will give you the money for the post—" age, Catherine was going to say; but meeting Hamilton's eye, she changed her expression into, "I will enquire for you if there are any letters."

"If there ben't," replied Alice, melting afresh into tears, "I know vary weel, his heart's all same to us—it can't be altered sae soon; though they reckon that nobody's ever good for much, after a soldier's life; and indeed I may say if it please God the same, I had sooner wrap that boy," pointing to the pig-driver, "in his shroud, innocent as he is now, than I wad see him in a red coat, twenty years hence."

"Ah my good woman," said Hamilton, "what would his majesty do for recruits if all your sex thought as you do? but," added he, more seriously, seeing Catherine look grave at

his ill-timed levity, "what is the name of your husband's colonel?"

"It's Rawlinson, Sir—he is vary strict, they reckon with men, when he's sober, and vary per-ticklar about his regiment—so my husband had noa chance of getting off—for one does'nt often set eyes on a better looking straighter made man."

"And what would it cost to get his discharge?" enquired Catherine.

"Why, Miss, Willy Simpson, wheelwright's son said he would have gone for him, for forty guineas; and he's sic an a wild one, that he could'nt hae been made ony warse, let him be waat he would, but all we have in the varsel warld would'nt fetch forty guineas; and then steward was very angry we had'nt mended roof, and so we should have done, but we were hard set all winter; and when this poor bairn was born, there was a fall of snow, you might have taken a peck off my bed, it came in so starving-like; but God's so good he gets one through everything."

“He cares for all alike, Alice,” said Catherine, “and whatever way he tries us in, it is all for our good—but I will send Margaret to your mother’s to see after you, as soon as you’ve got settled; or, if you like, she shall come to-day and help your children and you to remove.”

“Noa Miss, thanks to you all same; but I’d rather see her a bit after; for I shall be sae dull at leaving—and I should like to say good-bye to every thing, and happen it wad seem foolish to a young thing like her, that’s had no troubles of her own; but woe’s heart! nobody knows, nobody knows what they may hae to come to.”

Catherine, then, fearing that even she might be a restraint on poor Alice at such a time, took a kind leave of her, but not without turning to the little girl with the chickens, and contriving to slip a couple of shillings into her hand, under pretence of bargaining with her for her poultry.

“Quite a moving scene,” said Hamilton, by

way of rousing Catherine from the reverie into which the distress she had witnessed had involuntarily plunged her, “quite a Goldsmith,

“ Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain.”

and then the delightful doric in which she told her tale, gave it such admirable effect !”

But Catherine made scarcely any reply, and instead of pursuing her walk, she turned towards the Rectory, and arrived there before she recollected that she had taken her direction homewards—Hamilton however seemed determined not to lose the morning’s exercise.

“ Well, fair lady,” said he, “since of the two hours I had promised myself, more than one remains, I shall try if I can so far realize the idea of your presence, as to make my walk as agreeable by thinking of you, as it would have been in your society.”

He was out of sight in a moment.

“ Ah !” Catherine thought to herself, “ my father says rightly enough, that he who has no eye for the beauties of nature, has seldom any feeling for the misfortunes of his fellow-creatures.”

Catherine did not see her father till dinner-time, and then she informed him of poor Alice’s sorrows ; in which he sympathised as became one who looked upon himself, as the father of his flock.

“ Better, however, my dear,” said he, “ have sorrows like these, than vexations more immediately springing from her own heart. ‘ It is better to fall into the hands of God, than of man,’ that is, my dear, it is better to endure the trials sent us by heaven, than those for which we have to reproach ourselves, or which embitter us against our neighbour—but, however, we must do something for her, poor thing ; and yet I scarcely know what ; for such an honest, industrious creature as she is, would not like

to live on mere charity; even if we could afford to maintain her: and as to her having any parish relief, that is quite out of the-question; it would break her heart to mention such a thing—I think we must increase our home establishment of ducks and turkeys, and make her the overseer; and then again, there are her poor little ones, that's the worst of it—they would drive them about so."

In this perplexity the worthy minister silently swallowed several mouthfuls of Yorkshire pudding, till roused again by Hamilton's saying—

"Then Mr. Edward Longcroft does not play the Quixote so far as to go about redressing the wrongs of his uncle's tenants, and portioning the damsels in marriage, and fathering the orphans."

"Why you know, my dear Sir," said the Rector, "it would not be quite the thing for him to say to the world, my uncle is proud and avaricious, and ruled by a rascally steward; but

I am generous and noble, and when I come into his landed property, you see what a different use I shall make of it ! He does a great deal of good in a very unostentatious manner, and so does Miss Longcroft ; and I dare say when they get to hear of poor Alice's troubles, she will not be without help."

" Oh," said Catherine, " but I want her to remain in her own little cottage, where every cabbage in the garden is of her husband's planting, and every bud that comes out in the spring is like the return of an old acquaintance."

Catherine's heart was, indeed, so much set on this object that she would have gone immediately after dinner to interest Louisa in it, had she not been certain that darkness would overtake her before she could get there—she resolved, however, that the next morning nothing should prevent her ; but unfortunately, when the morning came, the rain came with it, and

fell in torrents, which confined her effectually to the house, to the evident joy of Hamilton, who seemed as if he was resolved to frustrate her design; for the next day and the next, he went out by himself on a ramble, and contrived to keep her waiting both times, in expectation every instant of his return, till again it was too late to attempt walking to the Hall, nevertheless, she blamed herself for her procrastination.

“I am determined,” thought she, “I will not be put off again, by any thing whatsoever. This very day I will call on Fanny Brayswick, and ask her to walk with me to Louisa’s, and Colonel Hamilton must learn to amuse himself for a few hours.”

That very day, however, he set her at ease with respect to his amusements, by telling her that he had an engagement to dine out, and that he should set off early to fulfil it. Catherine was a little surprised at this information, as she

did not know of any acquaintance that he had in the neighbourhood; and yet that he was more than usually interested in his visit was evident, from the impatient prognostics he made respecting the weather, and the exactness with which he set his watch, when the village clock struck twelve.

“Come,” said he, “you are going to call on Miss Brayswick, you say. I shall just have time to escort you so far; and confess the truth now, that you are very glad I can go no farther. I must be a most unmerciful *gêne* sometimes,—I would give half my income for your patience.”

“And I half mine for your humility,” said Catherine laughing, as she ran upstairs for her pelisse. Hamilton was all spirits as soon as they got out of doors.

“I was so afraid it would rain,” said he, “a shower would have upset all my philosophy.”

“He must be greatly interested in this visit,”

thought Catherine; and whilst she was wondering where it could be, they arrived at the end of the lane where Alice lived, and which they had to pass in the road to Mrs. Brayswick's: Hamilton turned towards it.

"Here then we part, I suppose," said Catherine.

"No—we will take a look at the deserted cottage; it is not a hundred yards up the lane."

"Well, then, go with me to Fanny's, and then we can take it in our way to the Hall; the next turn in the road brings us to Mrs. Brayswick's, you know."

"I do; and therefore I beg you to let us turn before we get there. Your friend Fanny's round, laughing face is so unsentimental;—and then her brother William, with his white hair and red cheeks. What a pair to visit the Paraclete, or Rousseau's tomb with!"

"But we are not going to visit either the

one or the other, at present—since, however, you are so saucy, certainly I shall not intrude either Fanny’s smile, or William’s blushes upon you—so good morning.”

“No,” said he, catching her extended hand, and detaining it, “you shall not go away without a look at the cottage.”

A few steps brought them to it: newly whitewashed, and its little casements put into complete repair, it seemed already destined to the possession of some more fortunate tenant.

“That hard-hearted Richardson!” exclaimed Catherine, “he has not lost much time—it is of no use my speaking to Louisa now—I’m glad poor Alice will not see it repaired and beautified, as the churchwardens say—but bless me! surely that’s her little boy looking out at the door.”

“Ah, the young forrager, sure enough—let us ask him how his pig bore his journey.”

Catherine went up to the cottage, her sur-

prize increased—Alice herself was there—not weeping and disconsolate, but in her best gown, the cloth laid for dinner, and a smoking piece of beef, and hot apple pie waiting on the top of the oven, ready to be put on the table.

“Well! this is a new kind of distress,” said Catherine.

“Quite the German style though,” said Hamilton, reconnoitring the viands through his glass, “misery and bread and butter; a pocket-handkerchief in one hand, a knife and fork in the other.”

Alice now came forward with grateful curtesies to Hamilton, as the author of her comforts, and to Catherine as the instigator of his benevolence; for she had penetration enough to see that going about to befriend the poor and helpless, was not his habitual employment.

“Well, we are punctual you see,” said Hamilton, “I told Miss Neville I was engaged to dine

with you, and so she was good enough to say she would come with me."

Catherine could not help laughing at the gay impertinence with which he uttered this falsehood, but she was too much pleased with him at that moment to contradict it; when, however, he took out his watch, and said they must wait a few minutes, as he expected a gentleman to join the party, she looked a little grave, but he might mean her father; and when he went to the door to look if his guest were coming, she asked Alice if she knew who he was expecting.

"Noa Miss, I no'but know that he gi'd money yesterday, on purpose to get things for dinner to-day, and telled me he should bring company;—he's been a kind friend, Miss, to me, and my poor bairns; and I know I has to thank you for it—morning you seed me he cam back directly, and telled me not to fret, an tak on

sae, for he wad tak care I should n't leave this here spot, as I was so fond on't like; and he gi'd me a whole ten-pound bill, and telled me to send for bricklayer and glazener, and get every thing mended and set to rights, and cleared up, and he would pay for it—he's made me as happy as I can be, whilst John's away—poor fellow, if he was but here to see me, and his poor bairns sae comfortable! but it must be as God pleases."

Just then the "twanging horn" proclaimed the York coach was going past the end of the lane, and Hamilton entered with an exulting air, saying,—

"Well, we may sit down, our visitor will be here in a minute."

Catherine hesitated: when the door opened, and in rushed John Pierson himself! his wife shrieked with surprise, and joy! "daddy! daddy!" the little ones called out, "daddy's

comed back again ! daddy we've gotten meat and apple pie for dinner."

The poor fellow himself was for a few minutes so overpowered with his feelings, that at first he saw no one in the room but his wife and children ; soon however recovering himself, he gave the infant, which he then beheld for the first time, back to its mother, and taking off his hat with some of the air *à la militaire* which he had acquired under the instructions of his drill serjeant, short as they had been, he turned round to Hamilton, and said, " My Colonel telled me Sir, a gentleman had been so good as to send money for my discharge—if so be as how you be the gentleman, I'se sure, Sir, I'se very much obliged to you ; and to you too, Miss Neville, I'se sure."

Catherine blushed at the implied connection between Hamilton and herself, but in truth she had never felt more kindness towards him, than

at that moment when she saw him surrounded by a whole family, whose sorrow he had turned into joy: he was in fact just then in the condition of Pope's Flavia, who—

“ Made a widow happy, for a whim.”

and his countenance was all animation, with an excitement to which he might perhaps have applied the envied adverb *once*.— But Catherine viewing the action through the glowing medium of her own benevolent disposition, it became, in her eyes, one of the most exalted virtue, and she expressed her sense of it by a smile so refulgent, that it conveyed more meaning than volumes of acknowledgement, and threw a light upon Hamilton's inmost soul, which showed how large a portion of it had hitherto lain in steril darkness. They soon left the happy pair to the enjoyment of their beef and apple-pie, and children's prattle;

and proceeded to call on Fanny Brayswick, for as Catherine had made the appointment with her to walk to Longcroft Hall, she would not break it; though she was delighted to think that the immediate motive for it had ceased to exist; Hamilton only accompanied her to the door, and then took his leave, much to the joy of William Brayswick, who happened to be at home, and volunteered his company to take care of the ladies on their way. Fanny soon saw by Catherine's sparkling eyes, and lively enjoyment of the walk, that something had occurred that morning to raise her spirits, even beyond their usual pitch; and Catherine scarcely waited for an enquiry into the cause, so well pleased was she to have an opportunity of relating any thing that redounded so much to Colonel Hamilton's credit. The surprize expressed by her auditors could not however be deemed very flattering, as it shewed that they

had formed an opinion of him, quite the contrary to any that this account might be calculated to inspire.

“Well to be sure,” said Fanny, “I am astonished; because, somehow, he does not seem a likely man at all to care about poor people, and distress, and things of that sort.”

“No, indeed,” said William, “I should have thought him much more likely to order a man up to the halberts, than to try to get one discharged.”

“You do not often think so ill-naturedly,” said Catherine, “and why should you now?—Colonel Hamilton has not been in the way of seeing humble life as familiarly as we; it is not, therefore, very surprising, that he should not seek out the distresses it is liable to—but it does not follow that he would knowingly do any thing to aggravate them.”

“No, to be sure, that’s a different thing,” said Fanny, “at any rate, he has shewn him-

self very generous with respect to poor Alice; and how rich he must be too!—I wish he had employed Mr. Pugh, when he first came to your house, and was so ill.”

“Fanny’s always thinking of Mr. Pugh now;” said William, “I do believe she was glad when I had a kick from my horse, last week, because my mother made me send for Mr. Pugh to bleed me.”

The denial of this charge, and the bringing fresh proof in corroboration of it, employed the parties concerned till they got within sight of Longcroft Hall, which supplied them with another topic, in wondering whether the family were at home, and what they should talk about.

“Do you speak, pray Catherine,” said Fanny, “if there’s a pause, for I never know what to say when there has been a long silence; and you always come out with something so nice, and just what I should like to have said.”

Louisa Longcroft had so much the happy art of setting every one at ease, that she elicited the nothings of William Brayswick and his sister with as much satisfaction to themselves, as they had expected to derive merely from listening to the conversation which they had calculated on being confined to her and Catherine; and much were they gratified at being further included in an invitation to dine at the Hall, the next day, with Mr. Neville and Catherine.

“Quite in a friendly way,” said Louisa; “walk here if the day be as fine as it is now, and our carriage shall take you home.”

“No,” said Catherine, “my father would not hear of that, I know: but we can walk, and he can ride his poney, and we will have *the chaise*” (there was but *one* in the place) “come for us in the evening; and Mr. William Brayswick will have the kindness, I am sure, to mount the poney home; and then my father

will return with us in the chaise, and he will run no risk of taking cold."

"Very well—then you shall have cards sent this evening: not that I should stand on that ceremony with you, dear Catherine, or with Miss Brayswick either, but of course we should wish to include Colonel Hamilton, as he is Mr. Neville's visitor, and, therefore, we must observe the proper form of the thing."

Louisa spoke so pointedly of asking Hamilton merely as a matter of politeness, which could not be avoided, that Catherine felt grieved at the distinction it implied; and could not help wondering how it could happen that persons in the same rank of life, alike gifted by nature as by fortune, and who must, in all probability, be liable continually to meet in the same parties in town, should seem anxious to have as little as possible to do with each other in the country, where it might be reasonably imagined there was every cause for them to be glad of each

other's society. She longed to tell Louisa of Hamilton's kindness to the Piersons, the knowledge of which, it appeared to her, must effectually remove every prejudice against him, if any such existed; but still there was something so unpleasant in the idea of holding out a sort of bribe in his behalf, that she resolved to trust him with his own cause.. "They cannot become acquainted with him and not like him," thought she, "and I had rather they should form their own opinion of him, than that I should seem to wish to bias them by mine."

At dinner, however, Catherine found no such restraint upon her tongue, and she informed her father of the whole adventure of her morning's walk, in the presence of Hamilton; who smiled to hear how much a very simple incident might gain interest from the manner of its being related; and Mr. Neville smiled too, with pleasure at the thought of the good action his pupil had done, and that by its timely appli-

caion, an industrious, honest pair had been saved from the wound, *once* so mortal to the feelings of an English peasant, of seeking relief from the parish—"You have done more good Sir," said he, "even than you calculated upon—everytime a poor man is rescued from parish relief I count upon a loyal subject being preserved to the state, and a good member to society. I thank heaven hitherto I have preserved all my parishioners from the injustice, and disgrace of being paid any part of their lawful hard-earned wages out of the parish rates; setting them the example, by so doing, of extortion and ingratitude, which we are loud in accusing them of, when they follow it; as they naturally enough are but too ready to do, when we have once deprived them of every feeling of honest independence, and confounded all their notions of right and wrong—Give me my text-book, my dear, I have long thought of giving a discourse on the words 'Thou shalt not sleep with the

wages of an hireling in thy hands' and I will do it this very next sunday; for somehow or other, I did not quite like the looks of one of our overseers, last vestry meeting, when I objected to his proposition for raising the rates, and lowering the wages."

Just then the cards arrived from the Hall.—The Rector put on his spectacles, seeing there were two.

"Every man his bird I see;" said he, handing one of them to Neville, "quite in style. I suppose we must go; indeed I shall be glad of it, for I want to have a little talk with Mr. Longcroft, touching the poor widow that they have been trying to find a settlement for, in his parish."

Catherine had not said a word of the expected invitation before; she now placed the inkstand and paper before Hamilton, according to his request; but she was greatly mortified to see him scrawl, in his most careless manner, a

negative, couched in terms as concise as the commonest forms of civility would admit of. The rudeness was not merely to the Longcrofts, she felt it fully as much to her father and herself; but true politeness can be taught by the heart alone; and Colonel Hamilton, with all the polished profession of perpetually sacrificing his own inclinations to the wishes of others, retained far too much of the selfishness which indulgence and flatteries must inevitably generate, even to do so in reality. She nevertheless wrote her father's acceptance, and her own of the invitation, and could not help feeling a little triumph in the discovery, that Hamilton was piqued at the readiness with which she did so.

“And why would not you, then, accept the civility, which you knew very well was meant as such?” she replied, to a reproach he made her between jest and earnest, for being willing to leave him so long to himself.

“Because it is a bore,” he exclaimed, smothering a yawn at the thought ; “ to dine out when one comes into the country to be retired. No man in his senses would seek the wilds of Craven to see plough-boys dressed out in livery coats, run against each other with boiled turkies, and roasted pigs, and jingle the glasses in the ears of the guests, before they can get them unfisted—and then I suppose Miss Brayswick and her brother will give toasts and sentiments—the *single married and the married happy* ; and *champaign to our real friends, and real pain to our sham friends* ; and then such of the party as are blest with *singing faces* will be called on to *favour the company with a song*, voice or taste unnecessary.”

“ No, Sir,” said Catherine, somewhat resentfully, “ your description might have done very well for a country christening fifty years ago ; but it has nothing to do in the present day, with such people as you would meet with

at Longerôft Hall. I dare say you would not see any difference between a party there, and in your own drawing-room in London."

"Catherine is right enough;" said Mr. Neville, "all places and all persons are much alike in the present day. The mail coaches go on the levelling principle, they equalize all things; bless me, Sir, I can remember when a lady getting a new bonnet from London, became the envy of all her neighbours; and as for a visit to the metropolis, it was much more a distinction then, than it is now to run all over the continent; and indeed few private gentlemen saw it oftener than once in their life-time."

"And so much the better for them," said Hamilton—"country gentlemen, as king James told them, are best at home; there, as he said, they are like ships in rivers, and make a grand figure, and in London they are like ships at sea, scarcely seen at all."

"Yes, yes; I don't like absenteeism of any

sort," said the good Rector—"You must set a good example, Hamilton, when you are Earl of Winterdale, and stay at home and improve your estates, and make your people about you happy."

Hamilton did not seem to have made up his mind very exactly as to his future plans—but however, he saw he had offended Catherine, and it was quite occupation enough for him at the moment, to try to restore himself to her good graces; which a little raillery on his side in return for a little pouting on hers, an extra game at chess, and a fine sonata of Beethoven's, enabled him to accomplish, long before the evening was concluded.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DINNER AT THE HALL.

A VISIT to Longcroft Hall had always been one of Catherine's greatest enjoyments; but, somehow or other, it happened this time, that she was so busy with her *affaires de ménage*, that when the Brayswicks called for her she had not even begun to dress; so away she ran up stairs, and Fanny after her, to help her, exclaiming:—

“ O do make haste, there’s a good girl!—
What a delightful day it is ! we shall have such
a nice walk, and William is in such spirits!—
Why wouldn’t Colonel Hamilton go ?”

“ I don’t know—I think he does not like
Edward Longcroft, but I don’t know why.”

“ No, indeed, I think not, nor he neither, I
dare say. Well, he’ll be fine and dull by him-
self ! I hope we shall have a party.”

Now Catherine hoped not—for she was so
fond of Louisa Longcroft that she never wished
for any other company, when she went to the
Hall : just now, however, her head was full of
so many other things, that she scarcely heard
what her friend talked about, whilst she was
tying her sash for her, and fastening her brace-
lets ; and as soon as ever her glass informed her
that her toilet was finished, she ran down stairs,
putting her bonnet on as she went, and looking
into the kitchen for the third or fourth time—
“ Now Rachel,” said she, “ be sure you re-

member that the chicken must be boiled just twenty minutes, no more,—and parsley and butter,—mind,—not white sauce,—remember that Rachel ;—all Londoners hate white sauce.”

“ Ah Miss, well they may—they’ve not such cream as ours to make it with—but I’ll take care, and I know the Colonel will like the tarts—you never made greater beauties.”

“ Oh take care of their complexions, then, my good Rachel, and don’t let that wicked oven scorch them.”

Rachel laughed, and away flew Catherine, but meeting Margaret, again detained her.

“ Now, Margaret, mind and set some filberts on the table, after dinner, with the fruit and biscuits—for Colonel Hamilton will want something to amuse himself with, as he will be all alone—and remember that he likes coffee early—and mind that it is strong and clear—one good cup—he never takes more.”

Margaret was just promising obedience,

when the object of all this solicitude appeared, and cut short the remainder of the injunctions; for it was a maxim with Catherine, which she in general most happily realised, that the comforts of a house should be the result of habitual regulations; not of directions at the moment.

“I will walk part of the way with you—if you will give me leave,” said he; “I shall find the day quite long enough, let me do what I may to get it over.”

“No, I hope not,” said Catherine, “I would not go, if I thought you would feel uncomfortable at being left alone. Ah, you smile! you were only jesting then—indeed I might have known you could not be in earnest.”

“Why not?”

“Because you have so many resources.”

“I shall find one quite enough for me.”

He expected Catherine would ask him what that one might be; but she did not, and, there-

fore the answer which he had prepared remained known only to himself. He, however, walked half-way to the Hall with the party, and then took his leave, much to the joy of William Brayswick, who, when he was fairly out of sight, ventured to shew his politeness to Catherine, by helping her over the stiles, and his wit to his sister, by leaving her to climb them by herself.

Fanny's wish to find something more than a family party at the Hall, was not gratified, as no other visitors had been invited—still her ready good humour, and innocent vivacity, found abundance wherewith to be pleased, in the novelty and elegance of every thing around her—and her admiration of the side-board of plate, and the dessert service of cut-glass, betrayed itself so strongly in her countenance, that Mr. Longcroft condescended to note it in the tablets of his memory, and say after the day was over, that really that Miss Brayswick

was a very pretty animated looking girl, and seemed not to want for sense! There was, however, under his daughter's direction, so much in Mr. Longcroft's establishment to be admired, even by those who were accustomed to greater luxuries than Fanny Brayswick was, and such an air of comfort joined to refinement, that Catherine, as she looked around, wished Colonel Hamilton had been with them, if only to see that the wilds of Craven could shew a party surrounded by as many elegancies as could be attained even in the metropolis, out of which he had often said it was not desirable to exist. Her thoughts did not, however, stray back to the Rectory for more than a moment: they were now recalled by Edward Longcroft, who sate next to her, and who extended his attentions to her friend Fanny, with that genuine politeness which is the result of amiable feeling, and which did not indicate much of the pride which Catherine had accused him of,

when she said he was growing like his uncle. But in spite of all his endeavours to make the conversation general, he could not prevent Mr. Longcroft and Mr. Neville from getting upon the corn question, and the landed interest, and the composition of tithes ; and then, in common charity, he was obliged to ask William Brayswick about his horses, and that brought on an account of coursing, and covers and guns and dogs, and divers other subjects of that kind, which generally give the ladies a hint that they have favored the gentlemen with their company long enough ; and accordingly Miss Longcroft rose, and led the way to the drawing-room.

Here Fanny found fresh subject of admiration in some beautiful medallions and designs, with which Louisa was going to ornament a cabinet, in imitation of Mosaic work ; and whilst she was looking at them, and receiving instructions, most good-naturedly given, respec-

ing the method of fixing them. Catherine, who was already acquainted with it, took up the newspaper, on which they had lain, and finding it to be the "Morning Post," began to look at it with the interest which a remembrance of her happy visit to the metropolis, with her sister, had left, ever after, in her mind. Her eye glanced rapidly over the advertisements and politics, to come to the account of the different exhibitions, and theatricals; but it was arrested in its progress, by a paragraph, under the head of the "Mirror of the Mode," which was marked in the margin by the stroke of a pen.

"The honorable Mr. Halston has returned from his continental trip, and is at present at his seat in Westmoreland. Colonel Hamilton we believe has not left the country, as was reported; having preferred rusticating in the wilds of Yorkshire, where it should seem he has found

a cure for the wound he received in his rencontre with Sir William Forsyth, who is now, we are happy to add, considered entirely out of danger."

The letters swam before Catherine's sight as she inclined her head over the paper, to consider and reconsider this paragraph, which seemed to have been put purposely in her way; that it referred to her father's guest was too evident, and that it referred likewise to some event, which, however sanctioned by modern notions of honor, was disapproved of by her father, was also but too probable; as well from the concern which she recollected him to have betrayed on the first night of Colonel Hamilton's arrival, as from the silence which the Colonel himself had invariably observed, respecting the cause of his sudden visit to the Rectory.

A feeling as new to Catherine as it was pain-

ful and indefinable, shot through her heart, as she wondered, to herself, whether Sir William Forsyth was a married man.

“ Bless me ! my dear Catherine ! ” exclaimed Fanny Brayswick, who had just turned her head to look towards the cabinet, “ how pale you are—what’s the matter ? ”

“ Am I ? ” said Catherine, turning in an instant like crimson—“ I don’t know, I’m very well.”

But she burst into tears as she spoke, and Fanny’s eyes instantly filled, as she reiterated her enquiries as to what could be the matter.

“ I am afraid Catherine, my dear, you feel the effect of sitting with your back to the fire, at dinner time,” said Louisa, “ I thought then, that it seemed too much for you.”

“ I think it may be that,” replied Catherine, “ I feel in such a tremor, and such a flutter in my spirits.”

“ It is that, I dare say,” said Louisa ; “ the

air would do you good. It is too cold I am afraid to walk in the garden now, it is getting late;—but we can go into the greenhouse a little while—and when we come back you shall hear my new harp music;—who knows but I may charm you as David did Saul.”

“But I am not like Saul—I hope you don’t think I am possessed with an Evil Spirit.”

“No, I cast no reflections,” said Louisa, with a smile, the archness of which drew forth another on Catherine’s countenance; and by the time the gentlemen obeyed the summons to coffee, the roses had also returned to it.

After tea, Catherine reminded Louisa of her promise, and Edward Longcroft brought her harp forward. She had got all the new airs and divertimentos of the season, and played them so pleasingly as soon to turn the thoughts of her listeners into the channel of gaiety.

“Come,” said Edward, taking Catherine’s hand, let us make up a little dance. Louisa

will play some of Niel Gow's reels to us.—Come, Miss Brayswick—Mr. William, let us see what we can do.”

Accordingly they began, and danced reels for about half-an-hour, though Catherine did not feel herself in that happy frame of mind which had given elasticity and spirit to all her movements, the week before, at the ball.

When they sat down, Fanny Brayswick began to declare how much she doated upon dancing, and how she should like to see quadrilles and waltzes danced.

“They are pretty enough,” said Louisa, “for show dances; but for real cheerfulness and sociability, there is nothing like the good old-fashioned country dance.”

“Oh, no,” said Edward, “for there is no sitting down with your partner, when you get to the bottom; and that, after all, is the best part of the dance.”

“ Oh, what a lazy notion,” said Catherine.

“ And a bull into the bargain,” said Louisa.

“ I’m sure,” said William Brayswick, “ I should never do to dance quadrilles, if they are like cotillons; for I never could manage them at dancing-school, the figures changed so often, I never could remember half of them.”

“ Then waltzes would suit you better,” said Louisa, half smiling at the thought of seeing him attempt one; “ for there is no great variety of figure in them.”

“ Oh, but they must be as bad the other way—you only go round and round the room in them, like a horse in a mill, my sister says.”

“ No, brother, I didn’t say like a horse in a mill—I did say they went round and round, to be sure; and so they do, don’t they Miss Longcroft?”

“Certainly,” said Louisa, rising from her harp, and sportively gliding half round the room, with her arms uplifted, and humming the “Hanoverian Waltz.”

“Ah, now,” said Catherine, “there’s a good creature! pray shew us this fine dance—remember we can see nothing of the sort here—nothing beyond ‘Money in both Pockets,’ and ‘Drops of Brandy.’ ”

“And very good things in their way,” said Edward; “but Louisa never waltzed in her life, any more than you, or Miss Brayswick,” and as he spoke he looked at his cousin with an approving air, which shewed that he thought all the better of her for not having done so.

“Well, but Louisa has seen others waltz,” said Catherine, “and I dare say she will be good-natured enough just to shew us how it is.”

“Oh yes,” said Louisa, “that I will; and so will he too—demure-looking creature, he waltzes often enough himself.”

Edward laughed, but declared his readiness to help his cousin to display her graces, and Catherine went to the pianoforte to play to them.

“What will you have?” said she, “here is the ‘Hanoverian,’ and the ‘Tyrolese,’ and the ‘German.’”

“And the ‘Honorable Miss Legge’s,’ said Fanny, helping her to turn over the leaves.

“And ‘Lady Charlotte Forsyth’s.’”

“Ah, that will do,” said Louisa, “for it is quite new, and a very pretty one; play it slowly first.”

Catherine looked at the name so intently, that Louisa thought she was reading the notes.

“It is not at all difficult,” said she.

Catherine began, and as she listened to the air, at once simple and soothing, and saw the graceful varieties of step and figure which it was adapted to display, she began to think that this Lady Charlotte Forsyth, if she danced a

waltz with as much taste as she had shewn in the composition of one, must be a very fascinating sort of personage.

“ Oh, how pretty !” exclaimed Fanny Brayswick, at the end of it ; “ and what sweet music ! and is it really written by a lady ?—how clever she must be !”

“ Yes,” said Edward Longcroft, “ rather too clever, in a great many things. She does very well however, for a leader at Almack’s—there she is in her element,

“ She moves a goddess, and she looks a queen ;”

and is certainly as complete a specimen of the modern travelled fine lady, as any gentleman, mad after continental varieties, need desire to see.”

“ I suppose Lady Charlotte, waltzes ?” said Catherine, looking at the name again as she spoke.

“ Oh, yes ! and dances the shawl dance, and recites and composes too ; a complete *Corinne*.

“She must be very much admired,” said Catherine.

“A great deal more than I should like to see my wife admired, if I were fortunate enough to have one; at least, I should not like to see her excite the same kind of admiration.”

“Perhaps if she were married she would not seek it so much.”

“I do not know that matrimony is a radical cure for vanity; in Lady Charlotte’s case it certainly is not, for she has tried it a good many years.”

“What, then, Sir William Forsyth *is* her husband,” said Catherine, with an emphasis so strongly expressive of an interest in the matter, that Edward Longcroft gravely said—

“Is there any thing in that so very surprising?”

“No,” said Catherine, crimsoning in an instant, “nothing very surprising; but I did not think of her being married, as she is called

Lady Charlotte—it was very ignorant in me—I might have recollected—but I do not know any thing about fashionable people—I don't wish it."

Her quick manner of speaking, and the tremulous flutter of her lip was not unnoticed by Edward.

"If there was any thing about them worth knowing," said he, "you would not be ignorant of it; at least it would have been the first time I should have found you ignorant of any thing really desirable to know."

This compliment, much as she esteemed Edward Longroft, could not draw Catherine's eyes from the words, "Lady Charlotte Forsyth's waltz." She played a few bars of it again, but she struck the wrong notes, and at last rose from her seat, observing that it must be growing late. When one person in a party makes this discovery, all the rest wonder they did not find it out before; and it proving, on enquiry,

that the chaise from Nethercross, had been waiting half-an-hour, the usual ceremonies of leave-taking ensued.

“What a pleasant day we have had!” said Fanny Brayswick, as soon as they had all got into the chaise; “how very agreeable Miss Longcroft and her cousin are! I really never could have thought Mr. Edward Longcroft was so handsome; but, somehow, his eyes!—how beautiful they are!—they grow darker and brighter the longer they look at one, and how very attentive he is! I am sure I don’t think he’s proud at all; what a nice couple they will make!”

“They will, indeed,” said Catherine, with a sigh, which startled Fanny; who began to be afraid that Miss Longcroft’s happiness with her cousin might be a delicate subject to touch upon: but Catherine was, in fact, thinking of neither of them; nor, when the subject was changed, did she speak much more to the pur-

dose on the next that was introduced ; so the whole party, at last, agreed to think it a fine night, and a beautiful moon, on which they were to gaze in silent admiration, till, to their great surprise, they found themselves at home, about ten minutes sooner than they expected.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING ALONE.

HAMILTON had not often listened with so much impatience for the most elegant equipage in London, as he now did, for the post-chaise which was to bring the little party from Longcroft Hall. He could not hide this entirely from himself; but he easily accounted for it, by considering that he had not often been left for so many hours solely to his own contemplations:

—however, as he had no remedy except employment, he began, in self-defence, to make a rational use of his time, by translating Claudian's beautiful description of Proserpine's seclusion in the Vale of Enna, for Catherine, who, charmed with his account of it, in the course of their classical reading, had expressed a great desire to see it in English verse. Accordingly he drew the candles nearer to him, stirred the fire, opened his magnificent writing desk, took out *quantum suff* of satin paper, walked to the book-case for Claudian, not forgetting Ainsworth's Dictionary, returned to his chair, sat down, and looked around the room, with a most agreeable feeling of self-satisfaction—in short, it was the luxury of positive occupation that was so delightful to him, and one of which a man of fashion rarely knows the enjoyment.

The tranquil frame of his mind was at any rate favourable to the influence of the Muses, and with a more charming prototype present in

his imagination, than perhaps Claudian himself ever dreamt of, he began—

“ In these fair halls sits lovely Proserpine,
And soothing with sweet song the tedious day,
Plies the swift loom, expectant of the hour
When Ceres should return—her needle paints
The birth and order of the elements ;
And shows by what true laws Nature appeased,
Pristine confusion, when her parent hand
Assigned each unfixed principle a seat.
Up springs each subtler essence, while below
Matter more pond’rous sinks ; transparent floats
The ether ; ocean swells,—Earth’s pictured orb
Hangs in the firmament ; rich colors grace
The various web ; stars glitter bright in gold ;
Dark purple flows the sea ; the rocky shores
Sparkle in gems ; so well the threads deceive
That whilst the enchanted eye fancies the waves
To swell and ripple on the moving floods,
The ear, deluded, seems to catch the sound
Of murmuring waters—breaking on the sands,
And sea-weeds dashing on the marble rocks.
Five zones she forms : one the rich scarlet woof
Displays, as parched by fierce and burning suns,

Barren and dry ; two others, temperate
And habitable, glow with softer hues ;
Joyless and cold the last, with sullen tract
Cover each pole—wrapt in perpetual gloom.

* * * * *

“ Nor were the regions undisplayed, which lie
By melancholy Styx, nor omen sad
Was wanting ; sudden tears obscured her eyes,
And dimmed the moistened colors of her web !
And now, with undulating line, her hand
Began to trace the limits of the deep,—
When the rent filaments and woof reversed,
Declare the presence of th’ ethereal powers ;
Straight she forsakes the half-unfinished work,
While crimson blushes paint her beauteous cheeks,
Beaming in modesty ; so ivory glows
When Lydian artists tinge its pearly hues
With rich Sidonian dyes. Meanwhile, the Sun
Dipped in the western wave,—and dewy eve
Led on the train of night, whose gentle sway
Shed sweet repose upon the wearied world.”

“ I did not think I had so much of my school-days learning left,” said Hamilton to himself,

as he paused to read over his versification, "but this rustication makes one obliged to look into every cranny of one's perieranium, to see what one can conjure out of it," and with this unconscious eulogium on a country life, he drew the sofa nearer to the fire, and throwing himself on it, fell into a sort of waking dream, in which images of "retirement books," Croxford's, and Almacks, chased each other in succession, and at intervals were all put to flight, by the blasts of a dry March wind, which, sounding in the wide chimney exactly like a carriage driving along the rough and wooded lane which led up to the Rectory, twice gave the Colonel the trouble to half raise himself on his elbow, to ascertain the matter more precisely.

When, however, the chaise really stopped at the gate, he thought it more consonant to the manners of the day to assume an air of frigid indifference, rather than betray any thing of more interest; accordingly, he slowly turned

his head towards the door, still keeping his recumbent posture, as Mr. Neville opened it.

“Well, my good Sir ! and ‘Ah, Galatea, the fugitive Galatea !’” he languidly exclaimed, extending his hand towards her ; but to his amazement, it was not even seen, much less accepted : for his Galatea as he called her, made only a slight curtsy, with an inarticulate murmur of enquiry after his health, and in the course of a very few minutes, her father expressing a wish for a glass of toast and water, she left the room to order it ; and instead of returning with it herself, sent it by Margaret, whom, at the same time, she commissioned to say, that finding herself fatigued, she hoped to be excused from reappearing that night.

Hamilton bit his lips, and crushing the Vale of Enna and the lovely Proserpine in his hand, consigned them in an instant to the flames ; and as soon as he saw his evening’s labour vanish into “thin air,” wished for it back again ; to

effect this, however, would have required a more subtle chemical process than any that he was acquainted with ; he therefore sought a remedy for his vexation more easily practicable, by following Catherine's example, and walking off to bed : soliloquizing himself, all the while he was undressing, with " I'm growing a precious fool ! staying here to write verses for the parson's daughter, and then burning them, in a pet, like a great booby school-boy, because her head is turned by going to dine at the Squire's. I suppose the heroic Mr. Edward condescended to squeeze her hand, and make love to her. I shall not, however, brook any interference of his, with my arrangements a second time, I fancy ; though it would be rather too laughable to leave London till one affair blows over, and encounter another of the same kind, in this semi-civilized corner of the world."

He then began to wonder how he could have staid in it so long, and to consider that by pro-

longing his absence from town he should stand a great chance of seeing himself supplanted in the circles of fashion, by some newer object; for in London, every season has its Lion, and the butterfly that could contrive to see two summers, would not be a greater phenomenon in the eyes of the naturalist, than the man who could command exclusive attention, for two winters, would appear to the polite world, in the metropolis.

CHAPTER X.

A DEPARTURE.

“ I HAVE taken the liberty, my dear Sir,” said Hamilton, the next morning at breakfast, “ to send for a chaise to your door, at twelve o’clock.”

Catherine heard these words as though she heard them not, for a mist seemed to come over her eyes, and a faintness to seize her very heart; but she was recalled to her self-com-

mand, the moment after, by a feeling of indignation at the abruptness with which he thus announced his intention to depart.

“How rude my father will think it,” she said to herself, and imagined that the glow which she felt upon her cheek was raised by her resentment of the disrespect thus shewn to him; but, had that been its real cause, it would have been, nevertheless, most needlessly called forth; for Mr. Neville quietly replied—

“Very well, Sir, very right. You should get out as much as you can; and you will enjoy our rides, now that you are getting better, and the weather coming in mild.”

“Rides! my dear Sir.—No: it is a journey, not a ride, that I must think of; you forget the unconscionable visit I have paid you already—a visit fit for an antediluvian. I never was so long in any place before, since I had the honor to sit under your wings at College.—No—I

must take my leave, and I think you must be very glad to get quit of me."

"No, Hamilton, you know better than that; and besides, we have shewn you nothing of Craven yet.—Bless me! why how long have you been? three weeks, or a month, I do verily believe; and you have neither seen Malham, Cove, nor Gordale Scar, nor even our famous Ebbs and Flows, though it is quite at hand, as one may say."

"My dear, good Sir, I have been nearer two months than either three weeks or a month; and in all that time I have never wished to see any thing beyond what I saw every day at your own fireside."

Catherine's heart swelled at the tone in which these words were pronounced; but she durst not look up to ascertain the expression which accompanied them: and she envied the simple turn of her father's mind, which always led him

to take every thing in its most literal acceptance as was now evident in its reply.

“ I am glad of it, my dear Hamilton, I am glad of it ! I wish, with all my heart, you may take the same willingness to be contented with your own fireside back to London with you: for you may depend upon it, that alone will make you the happiest and most enviable man there—you know what Horace says—

————— ‘ *Licet sub paupere tecto
Reges et regum vitâ præcurrere amicos.*’

When Mr. Neville once got on a classic ground he generally set off on an exploring excursion which led him far from his starting point; but at this moment he was called back to it, by the entrance of Rachel, with the keys of the vestry.

“ If you please, Sir, Peter’s brought keys, and says what time would you please to have him pull in bell, for old John Long’s funeral?”

“ Ah ! bless me !—yes, poor old John Long ! he would try to plough against a hale young fellow his master had put over his head ; and he had had water on his chest a good while, and so, poor fellow, he hastened his end—but as Horace says—

‘ Omnes eodem cogimur.’

Sure enough, however, I told his poor widow I would call on her this morning at nine o’clock, and now it is past ten.”

So up the Rector got, and marched out of the room, leaving his guest to clap Cæsar on the head, and make him the unconscious medium of conversation with his mistress.

“ Well, old boy ! will you go to London with me ? How you would be annoyed there, old fellow, among the carriages ; you would miss your lawn, and your green lane, and this famous hearth-rug. You’ll soon forget me, won’t you, old boy ? The absent are soon for-

gotten—aye, that's right—you turn your eyes to your mistress, to ask her if it be not so.”

Whilst he thus went on in the strain so easy to a man in long practised habits of assumed feeling, so trying to a young and inexperienced heart, Catherine remained with her eyes fixed on her work, and her breast filled with the most painful and contradictory emotions. One moment she was shocked to think that Hamilton could have so far felt the coldness of her behaviour the preceding evening, as to have determined so suddenly on leaving the house—the next she was angry that he should have resolution to do it so immediately—and this anger was just then the best feeling that could have come to her aid.

“He is, after all,” thought she, “a mere selfish man of the world; he has staid with us till he is tired, and then he takes his leave with as little ceremony as he came among us.”

Still her heart fluttered when he, finding Cæsar only a poor interpreter of what he wished her to understand, drew his chair nearer to her, and twisting the cotton with which she was working round his fingers said—

“ Can I do any thing for you in town, Miss Neville?—I shall be there in about a fortnight.”

“ Miss Neville !” thought she, for the appellation sounded strangely formal in her ear, after the friendly one of Catherine, or the playful title of Galatea, by which he had of late been accustomed to address her. She was so far, however, mistress of herself, as to say with assumed composure—

“ You are not then going there immediately ?”

“ No, I promised Halston to go down to him in Westmoreland, first—fine weather for the lakes—these Scotch mists will make it amaz-

ingly pleasant—I fancy he will not find me very delectable company up and down the mountains.”

“At any rate you will have a change of scene, and I dare say you will like that very well. I have heard you say change is always agreeable, even if it be a change for the worse.”

“So I have said, and so I used to think—but I have not given any proof of thinking so lately, have I Catherine?”

The tone in which this interrogation was put, shook all Catherine’s fortitude.

“Why then,” said she, “have you resolved so suddenly to leave us—is not that a proof that you are tired of staying with us?”

“It may be a proof that I have reason to fear I have staid too long.”

Catherine colored deeply.

“It was too surely my behaviour last night,”

thought she, "and it was indeed rude in me, and most inhospitable, to shew him such coldness, whilst he was our visiter."

In her confusion she rose to leave the room.

"Is there any thing you want?" said she, "Shall I put your books together?—Can Margaret do any thing for you?"

"Yes, if she'll be kind soul enough to huddle all my things into my trunks—she'll save me half-an-hour's labour; and just now I would not willingly lose a moment that remains to me."

"She shall do it directly."

"You are very considerate," said he, reproachfully, "I see you remember Homer's definition of hospitality—

'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.'"

"No," said Catherine, "I could not welcome your coming, for you would not let me make

any overture towards doing so; and now I would not speed your parting, if I had any motive to urge, sufficiently powerful to tempt you to stay."

"Do not say too much, Catherine, you could tempt me to any thing you really wished;—shall I tell you what would tempt me to stay?"

"If the chaise is to be here at twelve, you must have some refreshment before you go," said Catherine, and she ran out of the room as if to order it—but the moment she was on the other side of the door her fluttered spirits sought the relief of a burst of tears, and more than half of the little time that remained was passed by her in her own room, trying to obtain sufficient command over herself to make her appearance in the parlour again, with an unruffled demeanour.

Hamilton was too well skilled in the ex-

pression of Catherine's countenance not to see in it all the workings of her heart; and the conviction it brought home to his vanity was so gratifying, that it made him quite sufficient amends for the violence he had committed against his own inclination in summoning resolution to leave her;—that he should leave her unhappy was no drawback to the triumph of his self-love.

“It would be delightful to return and console her, at some future time, provided that he should continue to wish to do so; if not, of course, there would be an end of the whole affair?” Thus reasoned the man of the world.

By the time Mr. Neville returned, the chaise was at the door; Hamilton was profuse in his acknowledgements to him for the kindness he had received under his roof—the good man's eyes glistened.

“My dear boy,” said he “you have made us

your debtors,—you have enlivened our most dreary season, and you have been so kind to Catherine, I shall not easily forget your attentions to her—you have opened a new world to her,—you have given her thoughts and feelings she will be all the wiser for—she will read with redoubled industry when you are gone—you have pointed out so many beauties to her, and till you came she had in fact nobody among her acquaintance who had any pursuit or taste like her own.”

Catherine could not look up whilst her father spoke—every moment seemed to be bringing her nearer to her doom—even Hamilton himself was affected by the expression of feeling in her countenance, and when he turned round he saw old Rachel wiping away a tear as he looked about the room for his parcels, and even the ruddy-cheeked Margaret covered her face with her apron; for he had become so thoroughly domesticated, that he had often run into the

neat little kitchen, when Catherine was busy with her pastry and jellies, to admire

“ Her household movements light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty ;”

and Margaret thought it was a very fine thing to see so handsome a gentleman, and a Colonel too, and from London, so free, and lively, and asking the use of every thing, and saying such droll things to her young mistress.

“ The country is the place after all,” thought Hamilton, “ and the only place for the genuine feelings of the heart; I might have been at Long’s hotel, half a century, without a soul caring whether I was alive or dead, if I did but pay my bill ;” and with this reflection, he seized Neville’s hand, shook it affectionately, and turning to Catherine, she was going to give him hers, but he was not to be so contented ; he pressed his lips upon her cheek, which one moment glowed beneath his touch, and the next became pale as

monumental marble—he uttered a few words, they reached no ear but hers; and then sprung into the chaise, from which he distributed his money in profusion, not only to all who had ever rendered him any assistance, but also to the gazing urchins who had gathered round the vehicle to witness his departure: and in a few minutes even the sound of the wheels was lost in the turnings of the lane where he had so often lingered with Catherine, to conclude some argument, or avert some playful charge which he used to accuse her of always bringing against him, just before they reached home, when it was too late for him to retort it or to defend himself.

CHAPTER XI.

QUE FAIRE POUR S'AMUSER ?

POOR Catherine again felt, and more forcibly than she had ever done before, that it is on those who are left the anguish of separation falls most acutely. Her father, after making a final eulogium on his deportment, whilst he had been with them, seemed to forget that Hamilton continued in existence, and busied himself, as usual, in his parochial duties, his

classics, and his natural history. Catherine was amazed at his self-possession;—yet she would not have had it if she might: but when she sate down to her work after dinner, she was dismayed at the stillness, almost the vacuity, that seemed to reign around. She sate in the same window-seat, where she had sat the day after Hamilton's arrival—her canary birds made the same indefatigable rustling—Cæsar lay on the same centre spot on the hearth-rug—every thing looked as exactly the same as if the intervening weeks had been only the dream of a moment—but how altered were her feelings.—Still it was “delightful misery!” it was better, far better, to be even painfully interested in the welfare of one superior and intelligent being, than to find all society the same insipid blank. O yes! she was sure she should be quite happy in thinking of Hamilton—and hearing of him sometimes—and she was not at all sorry that she had so

few acquaintance,—for she suddenly found out that it was much more agreeable to be quite alone than to associate with those from whom she could learn nothing.—It was not, in fact, that day that Catherine fully felt herself alone: the flutter of spirits into which Hamilton's departure had thrown her, was of itself an occupation which still seemed to associate him with her. The feeling he had evinced at the moment of leaving her, she recalled and dwelt upon, until it seemed to console her for having parted with him; her cheek still glowed with the only kiss he had ever ventured to impress upon it, the only kiss to which her heart had ever thrilled, and which she held sacred, as the purest pledge, at such a moment, of tender friendship: her ears still vibrated with the tones of his farewell, as he had thrown his arms around her, and still she felt the melting fondness of that momentary embrace,—a hundred times she repeated his parting words—yet

what were they?—an inarticulate murmur, yet uttered with all the fervour of a blessing,—it was the sincerity of it that gave it such a charm to Catherine; and sincerely, indeed, was the benediction responded, whilst she again and again found it on her lips—and then she delighted herself with the thought that he would write—he must write—he could not be so unpolite, so ungrateful as not to write to her father,—and then his letter must be answered; —perhaps she should have to answer it! and that *perhaps* was enough to give employment to her imagination for all the rest of the afternoon. She thought of every thing she could say, every thing she ought to say, every thing she would like to say, every thing she might say; and again her heart melted over all the kind expressions of regret for his departure, and anxiety for his health, which she silently indulged herself in framing; though she would not for the world have ventured to put any of

them in a visible form, by entrusting them upon paper.

It was not until the next morning, on waking, that Catherine became sensible of all the difference in her feelings and situation; naturally active, she was an early riser, both from principle and habit; and between her own studies and pursuits, and the family cares which she took upon herself, in order to minister more effectually to her father's comfort, and do all the good in her power, she had never known what it was to think the day long; or to be in doubt how to amuse or occupy herself, for a single hour; but for the last two months, her mind had been so unavoidably turned to Hamilton, to thinking of procuring what might be agreeable to him, or beneficial for him, by what means to render his stay pleasant to him, and how to derive advantage herself from his society, that it was no wonder, if now that he was gone, she, at first, seemed to have neither, induce-

ment, nor end, in her usual employments. Glad of any interruption to her own reflections, she was pleased to see Fanny Brayswick coming up the lawn, with her work-bag on her arm, as a sign that she meant to pass what the ladies call "a long day," with her; and Fanny was precisely the kind of companion she just then wanted; affectionate, unassuming, and devoted to her—Louisa Longcroft might, perhaps, by her superior understanding, have withdrawn her more forcibly from the indulgence of her own thoughts; but there would not have been that sympathy between them; for Catherine was obliged to acknowledge to herself that Hamilton was evidently no favourite, precisely in the quarter where she most wished him to be one.

"Well Catherine, my love," said Fanny, as soon as she entered, "I have come on purpose to see you; I thought you would feel so dull, just at first, after Colonel Hamilton left you."

“What, you heard he was gone then?”

“Oh, yes; Mally Garbutt told us that he went, yesterday, and had ordered his letters to be sent after him to the Post-office, at Ambleside.”

“At Ambleside?” Catherine repeated in a tone of surprise, which was caught by Fanny, who re-echoed it, exclaiming:—

“Yes, Ambleside! why, don’t you know his direction?”

“No—I know he’s gone into Westmoreland, but he did not mention the exact place; and of course I did not ask him.”

“What, then, you do not intend to correspond?”

“Correspond! no, indeed, why should we?” said Catherine, scarcely able to check the tear which was ready to start into her eye, as she repeated to herself, why should we? “He can do very well without hearing any thing more about us.”

“Then he has not declared himself?” said Fanny, hesitatingly, for she was equally afraid of appearing indelicately curious, or of being thought to remain silent, through indifference to her friend, on a subject which, judging by her own feelings, when dear delightful Mr. Pugh was the theme, she thought must be more interesting to her than any other she could introduce.

“Declared himself!” said Catherine, almost angrily, “what do you mean, Fanny?”

“Mean? why I mean, that is, you know what I mean—I mean declared his sentiments.”

“On what subject?”

“Nay, now, Catherine, you must know very well what I mean—but you look vexed, and you may be sure I don’t want to know any thing more than you like to tell me; but I don’t know why you should look angry, and seem not to understand what I mean.”

Catherine’s tears could be no longer restrained,

for she felt herself every way to blame ; Fanny's eyes glistened in sympathy, and her affectionate heart, at once, entered into all Catherine's uneasiness, and enabled her to soothe it with a tender condolence, which is far more effectual than argument, with the unhappy.

“But why should you have taken such a fancy into your head,” said Catherine, when she had a little recovered herself, “as that Colonel Hamilton was in love with me?”—half hoping to hear some reason given, which might be convincing to herself.—“You must have forgotten how much older he is than I am, and how different his rank in life, and his connections are.”

“Oh ! but that's nothing. You know Mr. Reevesly, of Reevesly Park, was a deal older than Eliza Thornton, and a great deal higher, every way, and yet he married her—and I'm sure Colonel Hamilton used to pay you just the same sort of attention, and look at you just in the

same manner—and whenever you went out of the room he used to be dull in a minute, and seemed to think it such an age till you came back again; he scarcely ever spoke a word to me all the time you were away.”

To arguments like these, which Fanny would have continued to suggest with unabated fluency, Catherine could have listened

“ From eve till morn, from morn till dewy eve,
A summer's day—”

but she was resolved not to indulge herself in so dangerous a sophistry: thinking it wiser to “ assume a virtue,” though she had it not, she made a grand effort to speak with firmness.

“ It is not at all surprising, you know, Fanny,” said she, “ that I should miss Colonel Hamilton, after his having been with us so long; and confined so much to the house as he was by his health, he seemed almost more my companion than my father's; but I have not

the folly to think that he can have found the same attractions in my company, that I did in his; and of course, I look upon him as an acquaintance, or rather friend, whom I shall always think of with pleasure, and be very glad if we ever meet again—but it is just as probable that we never may.”

“ Well,” said Fanny, “ I’m glad your mind is so easy about the matter—to say the truth, my dear Catherine, I’m every way glad of it, for Colonel Hamilton is not, after all, the man I should like to see you married to.”

“ And why not? What objection can there be to him?” asked Catherine, with a quickness not quite consistent with her protestations of indifference the moment before.

“ Oh, I don’t know—you know I don’t know much of him—but I think, somehow, he is unequal in his temper. Sometimes he’s so polite and agreeable, and says such clever things, without the least study; and at other times he

won't speak a word, and looks as if he could eat any body up; and Mr. Edward Longcroft's groom told our James, that he fought a duel in London, and left the gentleman, it was thought, dead on the ground, and that he had to fly for his life—isn't it a horrible thought!—but I'm sorry I told you, for it has turned you quite pale."

"Horrible indeed!" said Catherine, faintly, for she was quite overpowered by contending feelings. After a few minutes, however, she began to reflect that this information was nothing more than what she had already conjectured, allowing, perhaps, for the exaggerations which the account of any thing unfavorable to a person's character always collects, as it is circulated from one to another.

Fanny, however, saw enough in Catherine's countenance to convince her, that it would be better to chuse any other subject than Colonel Hamilton's qualities, either good or bad; and

she was soon enabled, by that kind of good sense which is always the companion of a good disposition, to turn the conversation into other channels, which, if they did not afford much interest, at least awakened no uneasiness.

Catherine had another motive for liking Fanny's company, at this juncture, besides her own partiality for her ; she was a great favourite with the Rector, and Catherine was in hopes that the innocent vivacity and good humour which recommended her to him, would likewise prevent him from remarking the abstraction and restlessness, she was but too conscious of, in herself ; and so it did for that day, but the next, all was to begin over again.—She still felt as unequal as ever to exerting her former cheerfulness ; fresh means of hiding its absence were to be devised, and she could only have recourse to a dozen shirts, which, under pretence of having been for a long time shamefully idle, she now attacked with as much assiduity as if

each day's subsistence depended upon the quota of needle-work she could manage to get through in the course of it. Her father never having a thought, himself, which he wished to conceal, and always understanding the thoughts of others literally, by the expressions in which they might chuse to exhibit them, beheld nothing more in this fit of industry than the active exertion which he had always seen his daughter exhibit, whenever it seemed requisite, either in large or small matters. Nevertheless, it did strike him, one day, that she sate too close to her work, for she scarcely tasted anything at dinner; and when he looked up in surprise, at her sending her plate away almost as soon as he had helped her, he saw that she looked pale and languid.

“Why, my dear,” said he, “you must not go on in this way. When Colonel Hamilton was here you took a long walk every day, and

got a good appetite, and looked as rosy as a milk-maid; and then, in the evening, if you chose to work a little, he amused you with reading, and you had always some little joke going on; but now, you see, you neither walk, nor read, nor play, nor eat, nor do any thing, but brandish your dagger of Lilliput.— I won't have you work in that manner; I would sooner go without a shirt to my back, as thousands of my brethren have done before me."

Catherine coloured up to the eyes; but persisted in it that she liked better to work, just then, than do any thing else.

"Men hate to see work going on," said she, forcing a smile, "they envy us the calm amusement of it; you know I used to tell the Colonel so, when he would teaze me with catching my thread with the scissors, every time I drew it out, and telling me he would be my *Atropos*."

“ Ah, yes, Atropos—a very appropriate allusion—

‘ But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
Comes the blind fury, with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life.’ ”

CHAPTER XII.

COMING IN OF THE POST.

A WEEK had elapsed in this state of mental languor and inquietude, when, one morning, the sound of pattens announced the arrival of the post; nor let the gentle reader smile at our blunder, as he may conceive it to be, for the village of Nethercross, not being in the habit of receiving dispatches from Government, and the whole number of letters directed to it in a

year, not being quite sufficient to defray the expence of bringing them, the mail, if so it might be called, was entrusted to the care of a female, who, for the sum of three shillings and sixpence per week, walked two miles every day, in all weathers, to meet the coach which brought it, at the nearest point of the road to Nethercross.

Mally Garbutt, for that was the name of the post-woman, like many other persons in official capacities, consoled herself for the smallness of her salary, by the importance which her employment gave her among her neighbours—not like Cowper's Post-boy, who

“ Careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn.”

“ To him indifferent whether grief or joy,—
Births, deaths, or marriages;”

She had an intuitive sagacity in guessing of every letter that came between her finger and

thumb, whether it was from the son of aged parents, whom he chiefly supported out of his wages, or from the sweetheart of a young damsel, who was impatiently waiting for him to see how business might answer in the neighbouring town, ere he led her to the church ; or from whatsoever other branches of the families in Nethercross, all whose concerns she knew ; and as she generally gleaned considerable information in the domestic politics, at every door where she had to stop, she was always hailed with pleasure, not only for the written tidings of which she might be the bearer, but also for the abundance of news she was always so kind as to impart, gratis, by word of mouth ;—she was, moreover, a pensioner of Catherine's, to whom she had recommended herself by her active and unrepining spirit, and she was always glad to have a letter for the Rectory, as she was sure of being desired to keep every little overplus from the postage for herself.

Abundantly, therefore, did she rejoice in the long stay of Hamilton with the Rector, as he was continually having letters, or papers, or parcels, by the coach, and used to take great notice of Mally; puzzling her brains by calling her his Mercury, and telling her it was not the first time she had worn the habit of an old woman, by way of disguise.

“Nothing for you, to-day,” said she, laughingly, to Margaret, who opened the door to her, and whose sweetheart had been compelled to leave her by the same chance that took John Pierson from his wife,—“never mind, he’ll neither write nor send, but come—and so your betters must be served before you—there’s a handsome letter! see what fine large writing, and a seal, merciful me! with split crows and wild cats upon it; and big enough to take six-pen’orth of wax at a time.”

Catherine heard this curious description, and was certain it could only apply to a letter from

Hamilton ; he had then at last found time to treat her father with the attention due to him, and she ran to the door herself, saying, " Well Mally, how are you to day ?—So you've brought a letter for my father ?"

" No marry hav'nt I, Miss—but I've brought one for your father's daughter," and in laughing at her own wit, she remarked not the crimson glow which overspread Catherine's features, when she saw the letter really addressed to herself—she instantly put it in her pocket, and giving Mally Garbutt double the amount of the postage, returned to the parlour ; but not feeling sufficiently secure from interruption there, she flew up stairs, to her own room, and locking the door, drew forth the letter in an indescribable flutter of spirits, and pressed it to her lips, whilst tears started into her eyes ; and the next moment she smiled at the excess of her own feeling.—" But it is so delightful !" she said to herself, " to hear from a friend !"

At that moment she thought not of any thing but what Hamilton had been to her—the duel, his variable temper, the selfishness he too often exhibited, the manner in which he had left her—all the little disagreeables, towards which she had tried to turn her sole attention, when she wished to teach herself to think of him with indifference, were forgotten in the delightful certainty, that she held in her hand a letter from *himself*,—on which *his* hand had leaned—on which *he* had breathed *his* thoughts—on which *his* eyes had dwelt, as hers did then ; and again she pressed the senseless paper to her lips. At length she opened it—and first glanced her eyes over the whole at once.—“ Oh, surely there is a physiognomy, a countenance in a letter,” thought she, “ how pretty the lines look—the very writing is graceful ;” then catching sight of the words, “ loveliest of friends,” and “ fruitless regret,” and “ delightful hopes,” she, miser-like, refused

herself the pleasure of reading immediately the sentences which contained them, but sought to prolong it, by slowly dwelling on every line, from the first.

“ I owe your father many thanks, dear Catherine ! for the boundless hospitality shewn me during my happy sojourn beneath his roof ; and I trust he will permit me to make the acknowledgment of my obligation through the medium of her to whom I am scarcely less indebted—the most affectionate of daughters and the loveliest of friends. Tell him too, dear Catherine ! that now I am separated from him I find the truth of all his wise aphorisms—that

‘ Man never is but always to be blest.’

that, in fact, the present is a nothing, a mere fleeting shadow, gone in the instant that we try to grasp it ; and that all we can call our own is regret, fruitless regrets for the past, and vision-

ary anticipations of the future, which may never arrive to us.

“ When I think of Nethercross, and its inhabitants, I find myself in the condition of Shenstone’s Swain, and say with him—

“ I prized every hour that went by,
Above all that had pass’d me before,
But now they are gone, with a sigh
I lament that I prized them no more.’

“ But alas ! here the comparison between myself and Mr. Damon ceases—I may indeed say,

‘ I gazed as I slowly withdrew,
My path I could scarcely discern ;’

but I cannot add,

‘ So sweetly she bade me adieu,
I thought that she bade me return.’

Ah ! Catherine !—but I will not reproach you—a look from you sent me away—a word would bring me back again. Halston finds me miserable company ; fortunately he can talk all day

to his dogs, and in the evening, we *read the classics*; but it is not as when I read the *Argonautics*, and *Euripides* with you—surely the translations have graces that belong not to the original—at least the images and descriptions which then charmed me, in every page, now appear wonderfully forced, and cold; and Halston mouths them out, just in the same tones that he would use to stop his horse in a gallop. Perhaps, however, the fault is in myself; for even the beauties of this far-famed country, appear to me to be vastly over-rated—I know what you will say, that I am no lover of nature; but I cry you mercy—I am a lover of nature in Craven, if not in Westmoreland—I admire a *tarn*, though I do not care about a lake; I like a *scaur* better than a rock; and I had rather see ‘Pennygent, and Pendle Hill, and little Ingleborough,’ than

‘the heights of Helvellyn, and Catchedicham;’

so you see I am compelled to acknowledge myself a *Craven Knight* altogether.—And will you take me into your service then, Catherine?—take me as I am—with all my imperfections on my head?—Ah! how I wish I could see the expression of countenance with which you will read this request!—will wonder at the impertinence of him who makes it, be chased by pity for his discomfiture, at the negative your scorn will immediately put upon it! Yet my *Galatea*, my guardian-goddess, there are times when I indulge the most delightful hopes that my welfare, and well-doing are not matters of indifference to you. Both are in your hand—I resign myself, my character, my fame, my happiness, to your guidance—I know your father used to tell you that he often found me a rebellious pupil—but, trust me, his daughter should have no reason to complain of my want of docility. Halston has just come in, booted and spurred,

to claim my promise of riding on the margin of Winandermere—I shall quote Wordsworth out of compliment to you ; that is to say, if I shall be able to recollect a line he has ever written ; and Halston will shout to the echoes, and wonder how deep the water is, and we shall both declare we see the trout at the bottom, and there will be an end of our conversation. He thinks I am writing to my banker, and expresses much concern to find so many words necessary to persuade him to accommodate me.—He certainly is not quite out in his conjecture—I write to those who have my greatest treasure in their keeping—but I wish only for fair bills of exchange—Catherine, dear Catherine, answer me this letter!—We will have a regular correspondence, sentimental and literary, and stand forth another “ Henry and Frances,” to the admiring world. I trust your father will sanction the laudable undertaking. Give him my warm remembrances, and condescend to look upon

me, not as your Polypheme, certainly, nor as your Acis, for I have no desire to

‘glide a crystal flood,’

except as your image might then be outwardly, instead of inwardly, impressed upon my bosom, but as one who, whilst that bosom can retain a thought, must feel himself,

“Your devoted servant,

“ARTHUR HAMILTON.”

Catherine read and re-read this letter ; unable to define whether she was pleased with it or not. It was Hamilton’s own style, the same mixture of playfulness and serious feeling, which had often lent equal piquancy and interest to his conversations with her. But she felt that now, when they were separated, raillery and jest were far from being so agreeable as when they could be instantly exchanged for

more flattering expressions of individual regard.

“ If he thought of me really with the regret he pretends,” said she to herself, “ he could not write with so much vivacity ; yet if he did not wish to keep up a friendly intercourse he would not have written to me at all—for it was no way necessary ; a few lines to my father would have done just as well, as far as mere civility was concerned, and would not have subjected him to keeping up a correspondence ; which, indeed, I know he would not do, with any creature on earth, if he did not like it—he is too idle.”

So that, upon the whole, she resolved to be pleased and gratified with this mark of the consideration in which he held her ; and to submit his letter to her father’s perusal, in the hopes that he would tell her she must answer it.—But, then, what would her father think of the passages which were so equivocal in expression

that even she herself could not make out their tendency? She forgot that her father was not quite so much interested in affixing a meaning to them; and she was amazed, as she followed the direction of his eye down the paper, to find that he went steadily on from the first line to the last, without any more variation of countenance than if he had been reading a church brief. The good Rector had, indeed, less than any man, the talent on which Boniface piques himself, of "finding out a plot," and though a smile played upon his features as he slowly folded up the letter, with the utmost exactness, it was merely excited by the affectionate association, in his mind, of Hamilton at thirty-six, with Hamilton at fifteen.

"A very good letter," he said, as he returned it to Catherine, "and very like himself—quite gallant—politeness to the ladies, and bravery in the field, is his *code d'honneur*. He would

have made quite a *preux chevalier* in the days of chivalry—but they are gone by, sure enough, as Mr. Buske said,—I like his pun, though, of calling himself a Craven Knight—it's very good—like the latin derivation of grove, *lucus a non lucendo* ; it's curious to see how words come, in time, to take a meaning exactly opposite to that which they were originally intended to convey : recluse, now, from *reclusus*, gives us the idea of a man shut up, whereas it is rather one set at liberty—and the Greek *θωαζειν* which at once signifies *currere*, to run, and *sedere*, to sit still ; also in our own language, nervous, *strong*, and nervous, *weak*—reach me my dictionary of derivations, my dear—it is wonderfully pleasant to hunt all these seeming contradictions up to their root."

Catherine obeyed, and whilst her father pored, with never-wearied patience, over his favourite folio, she fixed her eyes again upon Hamilton's letter, as if she, likewise, was going

to analyze the meaning of every particular word in it, philologically.

The very next morning, Fanny Brayswick called to congratulate Catherine on having heard from the Colonel.

“And, pray, who made you so wise?” asked Catherine, her face once more radiant with smiles: she received the answer she had anticipated.

“Mally Garbutt had *just* called in, as she went past, and had *accidentally* mentioned it.”

“Oh yes!—and I dare say she would just call at every door in Nethercross, and accidentally mention it to every body she might chance to meet. It’s well I’ve no secret correspondence—but, indeed, I should be clever to keep it so, if she were the depositary of it.”

She, then, to prove that she had, as she said, no secret correspondence, took the letter out of her pocket—remember, gentle reader, Nethercross is two hundred miles from London, and,

at that distance, pockets are not only allowable, but deemed indispensable, for young housekeepers—we repeat then, she took the letter out of her pocket, and gave it to Fanny to read, looking over her shoulder as she did so; though it will be readily believed that its contents were already pretty well known to her by heart.

“What a clever, nice letter,” said Fanny, when she had finished it, “it certainly is not a bit of a love-letter, but it is so nice and lively, and affectionate too, that it’s almost as good.—And, now, you’ll answer it—and you write such a nice letter! you may well like to write; but as for me, I don’t know what I should do if I were to get a lover that would want me to correspond with him. I should be afraid my letters would soon cure him; I should come to you to tell me what to say.”

“Nay, my dear Fanny,” said Catherine, “now you do yourself injustice, as you often do—and you know I told you once never to be

so ready to acknowledge to yourself that you cannot do this, or the other, well; for it only makes you easy, under the consciousness of mediocrity, without trying to do any better."

CHAPTER XIII.

LETTER WRITING.

FOR all Catherine had began and ended so many letters to Hamilton, in imagination, as she sat at work, she yet delayed answering his epistle from day to day, scarcely knowing what to say to him, till at last her father told her it would appear unkind and unpolite to remain silent any longer, and she was not sorry to receive this little reproof, as an injunction, because the

mention of it would at any rate afford her a beginning to her epistle.

“ I’m sure,” thought she, as she seated herself at her writing table, and looked over all her pens, one by one, “ Fanny need not have complimented me upon my readiness in letter-writing, for I declare I neither know how to begin, nor what to say.” Yet in a very few minutes, no one who had looked at her would have imagined that she had felt any difficulty in the matter, so quickly did her pen fly over the paper ; whilst the tender smiles that played unconsciously round her mouth, and the animation that sparkled in her eyes, as she occasionally raised them, as though to bring with more precision, his image to her recollection, shewed how entirely she was hurried away by the current of feeling which she had, for a while, vainly endeavoured to stem ; and which she had now an excuse for abandoning herself to, at least during

the time that she was in a manner compelled to address herself to its object.

If Catherine had felt some reluctance to begin her letter, she beheld the termination of it with much more regret—it was like breaking off a conversation, but, alas! without the same power of renewing it *ad libitum*. She blushed, too, when she saw to what a length it had run; so much longer than his own. Yet she would not endeavour to abridge it, lest she should do as Richardson did, in his *Clarissa*; when, on being accused of prolixity, by dint of writing the portion complained of over again, and leaving out every thing good and sprightly in it, he found he had made it just twice the length it was at first.

“He will make no remarks to my disadvantage, if he have a real friendship for me,” said she, “and if not, they are not worth thinking of, either one way or the other;” and with this

reflection she gave the letter to her father for his approbation; he was, at first, unwilling to read it.

“My dear, you know,” said he, “I never like any restraint in matters of friendship; and, therefore, I’m sorry if you wrote this letter under the idea that you ought to shew it to me: there is something in the certainty of a letter being seen by any other than the person it is written to, which must a little fetter both the thoughts and style; for, in fact, even in conversation, you cannot very well address yourself to two people at once.”

Catherine assured him, and truly enough, that she never once thought about him whilst she was writing; and he then declared himself willing to look it over, as it was the first she had ever written to a gentleman.

“Just to give a little of the *limæ labor*, if there should need it,” said he, putting on his spectacles, “though, in fact, I am not sure that

our sex does not rather like in yours some little negligences and incorrectnesses—we like to feel ourselves the wisest of the two, you know—and we should do so; wisdom is not the distinguishing attribute of the female mind.”

He then hummed over the letter in a monotonous tone, not very likely to put Catherine in love with her own composition.

“ Bless me,” thought she, “ how stupid it sounds ! it didn’t seem so to me, when I was writing it,” and, as if fearful that its little remaining spirit would all evaporate, if it continued any longer open, she sealed it up as soon as ever her father had given it his approving nod; and Mally Garbutt had the satisfaction of conveying to the coach the epistle, as follows :

“ Nethercross Rectory, April 18.

“ MY father tells me, my dear Sir, that I shall appear both unkind and unpolite in delaying any longer acknowledging the receipt of

the letter to him, which you kindly paid me the compliment of addressing to his daughter.—My friendship for you, and my respect for myself, are equally concerned in avoiding an appearance of inattention, which would do great injustice to my feelings; I have, therefore, at length, summoned sufficient resolution to become my father's amanuensis, though, I can assure you, it is not without trepidation, that I submit my unadorned phrases to the inspection of one so skilled in all the nice felicities of language, and so fastidious a judge of its elegance. Nature, however has, I believe, endowed most weak animals with a degree of policy, in proportion as they are destitute of other advantages; and as a proof that I come in for my share of benefit in this her wise arrangement, I shall immediately endeavour to divert your attention from my style by fixing it on my subject; with this view I am justified in choosing one which I dare say you will think could not

well be exchanged for a better, when you find out that it is neither more nor less than yourself. But few words, I hope, are necessary to convey to you an adequate idea of the chasm your departure makes at our fire-side. I have always heard my father express the affection of a parent for you; judge then what pleasure it must have given me to see you treat him with the attention of a son! It seemed to make you at once my brother; and as I have often wished for the delightful exchange of sentiment which such an endearing tie must produce, no wonder that I felt its value, when you were kind enough to assume it for me, to stoop your intellect to mine, and to endeavour to raise mine to yours, by refining my taste and quickening my relish for studies, the beauties of which you daily exhibited to me in new lights. I ought to profit by the past—I agree with you, that the memory of it is all that we can call our own: Cowley thanks the Gods, that it is what all the malice

of fortune cannot deprive him of. But it ought to be turned to better account than a mere field of retrospection, or else how bitter the regrets that might arise at every turn of view ! I know I ought to make all that you have already taught me conducive to my future improvement, and I am angry with myself that I have not yet done so. Not one page have I advanced in the volume which you ran from, in the middle of its most beautiful episode. You will say that, even by my own account, I shew at least equal indifference to its attractions ; but the attempt to continue the lesson by myself, only reminds me that the master is gone.

“ My father tells me, I ought to say by my friends, as Petrarch did by his books, they would have been of little use to me, had they not taught me to bear their loss ! This lesson of wisdom I suppose never came into your head, Mr. Philosopher—at least, you never attempted to put it into mine ; for which I am very angry

with you. But, after all, it is the weakness of Petrarch that has immortalized him: how few know or care about his fortitude, how many sympathize in the sensibility which nursed a hopeless passion, even beyond the grave: to maintain, however, that feebleness is better than strength, would be an argument too strictly feminine; therefore away with the subject:—and now for domestic news.

“You are as much missed in the village of Nethercross, and all „its tofts and crofts,” as Buonaparte was in the island of Elba, when he took himself away in such a hurry; for, be it known, all great men form sudden determinations. Your Mercury regrets you much; she says you were a nice gentleman, for you were always having letters, or parcels. I say *she* still; for his godship persists in disguising his radiant form, in a duffield cloak, and still hides his “feathered feet” with the iron rings which you used to like the sound of so well, when you

were growing impatient for the news. Cæsar bears your absence *en philosophe*, probably, from his instinctive sagacity, knowing that you do the same. But your favorite Polish hen, the coquette in the French bonnet, as you used to call her, with her shaking plumes, still comes under the window at breakfast time, and holds her pretty tufted head on one side, watching for the crumbs she used to receive from your hand, and of which, you may be sure, she is not suffered to be disappointed—particularly as she now comes with a dozen additional claimants at her heels; having taken upon herself the cares of a mother, and acquitting herself of her duty to her young brood, with much propriety, maugre her constitutional vanity. Every thing around us is beginning “to prosper, bud, and bloom,” a thousand vegetable beauties have made their appearance which you will never see, and would scarcely look at if you did.—Rousseau says, he hopes there will be flowers

in Heaven—flowers of rhetoric are, I believe, all that you have any real admiration of—and as that reminds me that you will not find many of them in this epistle, I will forthwith relieve you from the further perusal of it. So here ends part the first of our “Correspondence, Sentimental and Literary.” How could you mention such ill-omened names as “Henry and Frances?” After a secret engagement of years, embittered by jealousies, caprices, and reproach, they were, at last, enabled to promulgate their union to the world, and Frances lived to be made miserable by the infidelity and ill-usage of the man to whom she had offered all the the warm affections of her youth, devoted all her intellectual acquirements, and sacrificed all her worldly prospects. When I erect an altar to friendship, may far other tutelar deities condescend to preside over it!

“Adieu! my father sends you his *benediction*! —never did papal one emanate from a purer

heart, I beg, therefore, you will value it accordingly ; and accept, along with it, the esteem and good wishes of, my dear Sir,

“ Most sincerely yours,

“ CATHERINE NEVILLE.”

Catherine felt as much agitated, as the time approached for Hamilton to receive her letter, as if she had been obliged to see him read it in person : and her cheeks glowed as she thought of the remarks he might make to himself on perusing it. But this kind of anxiety was so much better than the languor she had experienced in the dearth of all communication with him, that her spirits, for a time, regained their elasticity ; and she began once more to scale the heights of Castleberg with her usual activity and enjoyment.

She was, however, unconsciously to herself, supported by the expectation of hearing from

him again ; but when day after day elapsed, and the hope raised every morning in her breast, by Mally Garbutt's pattens, as she passed the end of the lane, was condemned to gradual extinction, as the sounds lessened in distance, she again drooped, and once more plied her needle, absorbed in silent reveries. Sometimes she would draw scenes of future happiness, in the imaginary contemplation of which her countenance assumed, unconsciously to herself, the angelic expression of every lovely feminine attribute ; at others she would abandon herself to regrets that she had ever cultivated tastes and feelings which, in the confined circle of her associates, she could never expect to be shared ; and which, therefore, only exposed her either to perpetual loneliness of the heart, a solitude above all others afflicting and terrible, to the mind of youth, or to catch, with an avidity which might be still more destructive to her

peace, at any appearance of that congeniality of sentiment and pursuit, for which she longed with all the eagerness of a miser, who is impatient to turn to the utmost advantage some newly discovered source of wealth.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ADDITION TO THE PARTY.

IT happened fortunately for Catherine, that her father's attention towards her, and hers to herself, received a temporary diversion, at this period, by the arrival of Mrs. Barton, her married sister, who came to spend a few days with them, her husband having some business at the markets in the neighbourhood. The domestic circle of the Rectory was therefore once more enlivened,

ot only by the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Barton, and their two children, but also by the friends who hastened to see them ; for Amelia was beloved by all who had ever known her ; and Catherine's gratification, in her sister's society, was always heightened by seeing how warmly she was greeted by her old acquaintance—and what pleasure it gave her to renew her intimacies with them, whenever her brief absence from her own home allowed her the opportunity of doing so.

Among the foremost who called to request that they might have a portion of Mr. and Mrs. Barton's visit, was Louisa Longcroft, whose play-fellow and companion she had been, from infancy. Edward Longcroft never omitted to accompany his cousin to the Rectory, though of late he had rarely visited it without her.

“ My dear Mrs. Barton,” said he, as he flew towards her to take her hand, with all the affection of a brother, “ I am fortunate, in being

for once, in this part of the world, at the same time with yourself; for I think, the four or five last visits you have paid at the Rectory, I have been away; and I have the honour to see your little daughter, too, for the first time—Aunt Catherine's pet, I think I have heard;" taking the little girl in his arms, for he was fond of children, and like all persons who are so, had a happy art of conciliating their affection. Whilst he was playing with her, Louisa was making arrangements with Catherine, to dine at the Hall, the next day, which she gladly acceded to, and with the more pleasure, as she found that Mr Longcroft was gone to York, for the assizes; being upon the Grand Jury.

Louisa insisted upon sending the carriage for Mr. Neville and his daughters, and then," said she, "Mr. Barton can take a seat upon the box, and protect you, and you will be altogether, and we shall have your company so much the longer in the evening."

Accordingly, the next day, the whole party found themselves after a delightful drive, at the Hall, where they likewise met Mr. Dacres, who was a gentleman of ancient family, but unfortunately the remembrance of its honours being nearly all that time had spared of its possessions, to its present representatives, he, as a younger branch of it, was glad to accept the situation of head-master to the richly endowed school of G——, in the vicinity of Longcroft Hall; where, devoted to the duties of his profession, he buried himself in the strictest seclusion, immersed in learning, and knowing no other recreation, but what he found in the culture of flowers, of which he was passionately fond.

“They are beautiful, but they have no utility,” said Mr. Longcroft, one day, when having called at the school on a matter of business, Mr. Dacres shewed him some carnations exquisitely tinted,—“and I believe in philoso-

phy it is admitted, that beauty, to be perfect, ought to give some idea of use also.”—This remark was made with all the pomposity of one, accustomed to lay down the law to his country neighbours.

“It depends upon what you may think useful ;” said Mr. Dacres,—“to me, flowers appear to possess the most sublime of all uses ; for they shew us the love of God, in calling objects into existence, for no other end, as it appears to us, than to delight our senses, by their hues and fragrance : they seem to authorize enjoyment, and therefore ought to teach us gratitude.”

Mr. Longcroft thought this argument might do very well for a clergymen, or a parson, as he generally termed any of the clerical profession, below a bishop, that might happen to differ from him in opinion ; but a political economist would, he believed, annex a good deal more value to the florist’s art, if it could be

rendered any way conducive to the sparing of corn.

He invited Mr. Dacres, however, to the Hall, because he was a gentleman, and, though poor himself, allied to the rich and powerful ;—and Mr. Dacres accepted the invitation, because he heard that, notwithstanding her father's lack of taste and feeling, Miss Longcroft had one of the most beautiful green-houses in Craven. Thus commenced an acquaintance which Edward Longcroft was delighted with, for Mr. Dacres possessed a taste in common with him, as well as with Louisa,—if with her he cultivated flowers, with him he cultivated the graces of a pure style, founded on the finest models of Greek and Roman eloquence—to become an able orator, was Edward Longcroft's highest ambition, for the most disinterested patriotism glowed in his breast ; and “to teach the passions to move at the command of virtue,” and promote the interests of his country, by gaining

the hearts of his auditors, was what he ardently looked forward to, through the interest of his uncle, in procuring him a seat in the British Senate.

Amelia had never seen Mr. Dacres before, and was much pleased with the fine expression of thought, which his countenance exhibited, and with the general suavity and composure of his demeanour. Mr. Neville had often met with him, and admired his learning, which he said would do credit to lawn sleeves, whilst he revered the piety that made him find sufficient excitement in the fulfilment of the noiseless though important duties of his situation; these were precisely the qualities which Mr. Dacres, in his turn, always admired in the worthy Rector; and, in short, by a chance which even in small meetings rarely does, and in large ones never can occur, all the party felt the most cordial good-will, and esteem for each other; insomuch that the expectations they had indi-

vidually indulged, of a day of refined and cheerful enjoyment, were exceeded by the pleasure it actually afforded them together.

Perhaps the absence of the elder Mr. Longcroft had some share in the exhilaration of spirits which every one was sensible of; for Louisa and Edward Longcroft, were that day evidently more at ease without him; and indeed, at any time in his presence, few were unconscious of the chilling effect invariably produced by a substitution of the politeness inculcated by rule, for that which springs from the heart.

“What a charming garden yours is, Louisa,” said Mrs. Barton, as she walked round it to see some beautiful auriculas of Mr. Dacre’s planting, “how much it is improved, even since I was here in the autumn.”

“Oh, but do you remember the fine garden we made in the corner of your father’s orchard, Amelia,” said Edward Longcroft.

“ Yes, very well; and I remember, too, how frightened I was when I saw what fine flowers you had robbed his favorite beds of, for it.”

“ And how affronted we both were, when it was finished, and Catherine would lead little Ponto through the fairy plantation, on his hind legs, and knocked down all its glories with her frock, as she turned the corners; away went

‘ The lily, lady of the flowering field,
The flower-de-luce, her lovely belamour.’

but she always was a mischief-maker.”

As Edward spoke thus of her, he pressed her hand with affectionate familiarity, and smiled at her with a fullness of sensibility calculated to awaken a thousand innocent and endearing recollections, had she not felt almost distrustful of her claim upon his friendship; for she could not hide from herself, that there existed one for whom, although too probably a character of far less worth, she still entertained a sentiment

of much more warmth; and this consciousness clouded her countenance, for the moment, with a gloom which was instantly reflected in that of Louisa, whose eyes seemed as if they would penetrate into Edward's innermost soul—but he was not sensible of their scrutiny—for he was still talking to Mrs. Barton of “days lang syne,” and had then got into the middle of some adventures that had befallen them, on an expedition to Gordale-Scaur.

“Do let us have another day there,” said he,
“I should like a pic-nic, among the

‘Antres vast, and deserts idle.’

what do you say Dacres? Will you join our party? You will find your favorite *Palemonium Ceruleum* in abundance there.”

“Aye, and the *Gentiana Amarella*, too,” said Mr. Neville, “and the *Primula Farinosa*, with its elegant pink blossoms, only that does

not flower till August ; and the *Campestris*, and what is better than all the rest, the *Lichen Exanthematicus*, which you won't very often see any where else, I can tell you."

" I feel no want of inducements to join a party like the present," said Mr. Dacres, " but those you hold out would draw me even alone to the spot ; therefore, unfortunately for my gallantry, my compliance must be placed to the account of self-gratification."

" Well," cried Edward, " all the world is actuated by the same motive, at least so says Helvetius. I know, at any rate, I am myself, in this instance ; so reward my sincerity, Mrs. Barton, and let us fix to-morrow for our expedition."

" Not to-morrow," said Amelia, looking affectionately at her husband, " it is the visitation, and Henry must dine at Skipton, with my father."

“ Well, then, the next day.”

“ Yes, the next day ;” every one echoed, and so the next day was “ carried,” *nem con.*

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE.

CATHERINE was very fond of her brother-in-law, with whom she was a special favorite, in return. She generally accompanied him on his rambles, when he came to the Rectory, whilst his wife was engaged with her children; and she had been accustomed to look forward to his conversation, as something of a treat; for he was well read, and was fond of talking over

he studies he had engaged in, since they had last met; having no one near him, at Blackthorn-cottage, of pursuits congenial to his own. Now, however, for the first time, she found deficiencies in him, which made him appear a less agreeable companion than he had ever been before.

“ Henry Barton,” said she to herself, “ is a good creature, as ever was born ; and he has great merit, too, in cultivating his mind so sedulously, surrounded as he is only by the clodpoles his father has brought him up amongst. But, after all, he is such a mere matter-of-fact-man, that one soon tires of him—he tells one an anecdote just as he reads it, and there’s an end of it. And then he moralizes, too, in such a common-place way, and wonders how the Romans could degenerate so as to suffer themselves to be conquered by the Goths, and finds out that it was an abominable thing in Henry VIII, to cut off his wives’ heads, and not much

better in Queen Elizabeth, to sign Essex's death warrant. There is no play of imagination about him—no whim, no wit—he would as soon think of launching a man of war, as maintaining a paradox.”

Henry Barton was not, however, so deficient in quickness, but that he could perceive, on his side, that Catherine was by no means the lively companion she had been.

“ I think your sister is altered, Amelia,” he remarked, as they were retiring to rest, after their visit to Longcroft Hall.

“ She does look thin,” said Amelia, “ I observed, yesterday, that her clothes seemed to hang upon her, and she has lost a great deal of her colour.”

“ And of her spirits, too, which is worse,” said Henry, “ you don't think she's in love, do you ?”

“ In love, my dear ! who can she be in love with ? you know she quite laughs at William

Brayswick ; and Mr. Pugh, she told me herself, is engaged to Fanny—and there is nobody else.—Oh yes ! to be sure, there is Edward Longcroft, but she knows that he has been engaged to his cousin, ever since they were children ; besides, that's quite out of the question—she has too much good sense, and too much honest pride, to think of a man, whose uncle would conceive it the greatest condescension in the world to look upon her.—I should like to see old Mr. Longcroft giving his consent, even supposing he would give it, to receiving any body like us, as his niece.”

“ Well, but that is not all ! you forget Colonel Hamilton, and well you may, for Catherine does not mention his name now, perpetually, as she did in her letters.”

“ For a very good reason, I dare say ; now that she has no longer the trouble of entertaining him, and thinking of ordering what he would like, I don't suppose she ever thinks

about him—it is not likely she should—a man twelve or fourteen years older than herself, and in quite a different sphere of life besides:—a very dissipated sphere too; I am afraid.”—Amelia, as she spoke, was pinning the binder of her night-cap, the exact plaiting and snowy whiteness of which formed an appropriate emblem of the regularity and purity of her own mind; and as she bent over her sleeping infants, to imprint the kiss of maternal love upon their rosy cheeks, Henry thought that, however dissipated a man might be, there was something in the portraiture of a young and tender mother, that would go a long way towards rendering him enamoured of virtue.

Catherine was not sorry to see her father and Henry mount their horses, the next morning, to go to the quarterly sessions; for she could not help remembering that it was three months, that very day, since she had first seen Colonel Hamilton; and so many recollections crowded

into her mind, at the same time, that she felt it would be quite as much as she could do, to prevent her gravity from being noticed by her sister.—With the assistance of the children, however, the day passed off, in a kind of affectionate tranquility, as soothing to her spirits, as it was endearing to her heart.

Mrs. Barton was four years older than Catherine, and of course, on the lamented death of her mother, she was deemed capable of directing the household affairs, whilst Catherine remained comparatively a child. But the precedence which this difference of age necessarily gave her, had no other effect upon her behaviour towards her younger sister, than that of making her still more anxious to supply to her, as much as she was able, the place of the parent they had lost; as well as to continue her companion, and almost her playfellow.

The sweet sedateness of Amelia's manners, the evenness of her temper, and the correctness

of her judgment, were all calculated to excite equal respect and love, even in those who had no particular interest in studying her character: but in Catherine, who could never look at her without remembering the kindness she had received from her, in her earliest youth, these feelings were heightened by a consciousness of individual gratitude, which rendered her continually anxious to shew her that her tender cares had been well bestowed; and as she now looked upon her sister's countenance, serene as the unruffled lake, which reflects only the aspect of the heavens, she felt her own suffused with momentary crimson, as she imagined the pain she must suffer, if ever she should entertain a thought which she would blush to acknowledge to one whose mind and heart were the repositories of practical wisdom, and well-regulated affections.

Mrs. Barton always consoled herself, in her husband's occasional absences, (for they did not

occur often enough to enable her to become reconciled to them) with an additional share of her children's company, provided she was so situated as to be able to indulge her own inclination—and with Catherine there was no fear of opposition to it. Master Percival, therefore, and Miss Catherine took their places at the dinner table, to the great pleasure not only of their mother and aunt, but also of Margaret, who waited upon them, and old Rachel, who came into the room to gladden herself with looking at them, under pretence of seeing how they liked their pudding.

Catherine was resolved to make it a gala-day altogether to the little ones; and, therefore, as soon as dinner was over, she sallied forth with them, into the great barn, where, with the aid of the clerk, who was as much the good Rector's assistant in temporal as in spiritual affairs, being superintendant both of the stable and gardens, and compounder of the small tythes, she put

up a swing; but not chusing to risk her sister's treasures in it, by themselves, she took them alternately in her lap, till, at last, finding the acknowledgment that they had had swinging enough, would never come from their cherry lips, she was forced to have compassion on her own head, and, after running races round the garden with them, to return to the parlour, where they were promised they should have their bread and milk, on condition that they sate very still, on the carpet, to build houses with cards, "whilst mamma and aunt played pretty music."

"And what shall we have?" said Amelia, turning over the leaves of a thick volume, with every page of which she was familiar, "I do love all those things, so, though I have heard them over and over again—indeed every one brings its scene along with it—what must we have?"

"I think some of the duets in 'Acis and

Galatea,' are very pretty," said Catherine, her eye lingering on every note.

"Oh they are beautiful!—I remember my father used to laugh at me, for singing

‘As when the dove
Laments her love.’

when Henry left me; but it always was my favourite song."

"It is very pretty—but I am so fond of duets! and you take a second so well."

They accordingly agreed to begin with

‘The flocks shall leave the mountains.’

"You shall take Galatea, and I will be Acis," said Mrs. Barton; "but what shall we do for a Polypheme? we shall miss him in

‘I burn! I rave!’"

"Yes," said Catherine, "we want a Polypheme," and she sighed involuntarily—for the

name had no association in her mind with a savage monster.

“If Henry were here, he would come in very well for that; he could manage these passages, they are so easy,” said Mrs. Barton, “must we wait for him, and sing something else?”

“No,” said Catherine, “we will leave out ‘the monster Polypheme,’ altogether; we will have something else.”—Accordingly they began

‘Hush, hush, ye pretty, pretty, warbling choir.’

and never had Catherine sung more delightfully; for her thoughts reverted to Hamilton, who had so often accompanied her; and every note was fraught with the full expression of the tender and elegant feeling which is the characteristic of the composition. Suddenly Mrs. Barton stopped,—

“There is a knock at the door,” said she, “who can it be, at this time of night?”

“Very likely William Brayswick,” said Catherine, “and Fanny with him.”

“How well you sing this, Catherine,” said Mrs. Barton, “let us finish it before they come in.”

Accordingly they continued, regardless of the little bustle in the passage—they imagined William was hanging up his great coat, or Fanny was taking off her clogs; when lo, the door was opened, and in walked Hamilton himself!—Catherine in an instant felt as if all the world, or at least all that she wished for in it, was secured to her in the narrow compass of the room, and by the eagerness with which he flew to her, the undissembled joy that flashed from his eyes, the fervour with which he pressed her trembling hands, she felt, also, that, however he might have passed the time he had been away, he experienced as great a delight as she did, in this, to her, most unexpected meeting.—She knew not what she said—she would

have smiled, but her very soul fluttered on her lips, and she felt them quiver in despite of herself, whilst tears started into her eyes, as they one moment fixed themselves upon his face, with unconscious earnestness, and fell the next beneath his ardent, answering, enquiring look. She then recollected that she had suffered both her hands to remain in his, nay, she was not sure that they had not returned his impassioned pressure, and covered with blushes, she made a strong effort to recover her self-command.

“How little I thought of seeing you to-night ;” said she, “or indeed ever again ! how delighted my father will be ! was not Margaret surprised, when she opened the door ?—But I forgot, this is my sister, Colonel Hamilton—Mrs. Barton,—Colonel Hamilton has so often heard me talk of you, Amelia, I dare say he does not look upon you as a stranger.”

Mrs. Barton made the prettiest little matronly curtsey imaginable, in return to Hamilton’s

profound bow—but that curtsey was all he got in reply to his compliment, when he said that he should be sorry indeed to consider any of Mr. Neville's family as strangers, or to be regarded as a stranger by them."

"My dears," said Mrs. Barton, "it is time for you to have your bread and milk."

"You said we were to have it with you and aunt, when you got tea mamma," said the little boy, without venturing to take his eye, for a moment, off the house, two stories high, which he had raised with the cards his little sister held in her lap for him.

"Oh, the darlings!" exclaimed Catherine, "and so they shall; I know you'll excuse it, Colonel Hamilton."

The Colonel, of course, professed he should be infinitely delighted to see the young ones busy with their spoons and basins; and Catherine said she would hasten tea, for she was very glad of a few minutes to recollect herself, and

still more glad of the office which again devolved upon her, of giving orders to get the room ready for Hamilton, which he had before slept in. She flew up stairs.

“ O so light a foot

Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint !”

Margaret and Rachel were both delighted with Hamilton's return, and Catherine could not but see their affection for herself, in the alacrity with which they prepared every thing for the accommodation of *her* guest, for so they seemed now determined exclusively to consider him.

Catherine made her re-appearance in the parlour, at the same time with the tea-things ; and as Hamilton took his usual place at the table, she gave him a smile, which bespoke such fulness of content, that he felt sufficiently satisfied as to the degree of happiness with which his return had inspired her breast ;—her little

nephew and niece sate on each side of her, and lavished their infantine caresses on her, whilst she shewed them every indulgence which their mother, judicious as she was affectionate, would suffer them to be treated with.—It was a pretty family scene, and so greatly did Hamilton enjoy it, whilst his eyes were fixed on Catherine, that, when Mrs. Barton observed, by way of adding something to the conversation, it was a pity her father was not at home, he pitied her for finding out, that any thing was wanting, to the completion of it.

“Oh but there is another old acquaintance,” said Catherine, “who will rejoice, I was going to say, as much as any of us, in seeing you again—I declare I had quite forgotten him—I must witness the meeting.” So saying, she ran to the door, calling “Cæsar, Cæsar !” and Cæsar instantly made his appearance, and welcomed Hamilton, by barking, jumping, wagging his tail, and returning the caresses lavished

upon him, with a rough heartiness, which it required some management to cope with. The children, however, became anxious for a share of Cæsar's notice, and Colonel Hamilton soon won their hearts, by lifting them alternately on his back, and making him walk round the room with them; nor was Mrs. Barton herself quite insensible to this proof of his politeness: retaining, however, good sense enough to recollect, that he was most likely to be tired the first with the exhibition of it, she soon released both him and Cæsar, and retired with her little prattlers to put them to bed, an office which she very seldom deputed to another.

The moment that her sister shut the door, was one of mingled delight and embarrassment to Catherine; but it was only for a moment that she could remain silent; for Hamilton instantly brought his chair close to hers, and throwing his arm round her with an air of affectionate familiarity—

“Catherine,” said he, “tell me if you are glad to see me.”

“Tell you, Colonel Hamilton !” she repeated in a faltering voice,—her eyes met his, and sufficiently said how unnecessary the question. “You saw how glad I was,” she went on, in a firmer tone, “I was so surprised ! so astonished—I scarcely know how I felt.”

“But how could you imagine that I meant to return to London, without coming again to Nethercross?”

“How could I imagine you would come again,” said Catherine—adding, in accents of the tenderest reproach, as the recollection of the anguish his hasty departure had given her, filled her eyes with tears, “you took leave of us—you did not even give us a day’s notice of your intention of going; how could I imagine that you would ever think of Nethercross again, or find any thing in it worth coming back to?”

“ But how could you imagine that I was so devoid of gratitude, of common civility, putting every other consideration out of the question, as to make such a leave taking, as that, do for your excellent father, after all his kindness and hospitality to me—and as for yourself, is it possible, Catherine, that you could, for one moment, do me such a cruel injustice, as to think me capable of bidding you farewell, with even the appearance of composure, if I had looked upon that farewell as likely to be for any length of time.”

“ If I did you injustice, it has been my own punishment,” said Catherine, “ but do not let us talk of it now,”—she added, seeing from the brilliant light her words kindled in Hamilton’s eyes, that he annexed a meaning to them which she would gladly disavow, even to herself;—“ when we take leave this time, we will have no regrets.”

“ That will depend, to me, at least, upon the

terms on which we are to meet again," said Hamilton, and he seized her hand ; but just as he was going to insist upon being allowed to retain it, till he had finished his speech, Mrs. Barton entered, and he threw himself back in his chair, with an air of impatience, which threw Catherine into an agony, lest her sister should perceive it. Mrs. Barton, however, more intent on shunning any observations on herself, than making them on others, went to put her candlestick on a side-board, and then took her seat by the fire, and drawing her work-table before her, soon appeared so thoroughly engrossed with the art and mystery of open hemming, and satin stitching, that both Hamilton and Catherine began to comprehend she meant them to consider their *tête à tête* as still uninterrupted. Hamilton, however, could not help wishing in his heart, that she had either gone to the visitation dinner, with her husband, or to bed with her children ; nevertheless, as it

was necessary to say something to her, and as he had nothing else to say, he asked her, according to the invariable usage in such a predicament, to *favor* him with some music; but she begged leave to decline, with so much real trepidation, that he saw she was in earnest in her refusal, and therefore forebore to press her any further—he next tried to lure Catherine to the instrument, but she felt herself unequal to perform with the correctness which she should wish, in her sister's hearing, and she pleaded having already played, till her fingers were weary, before he came in.

“ Well, I cannot deny that excuse, certainly, for I must confess to having heard you singing; and, if I mistake not, Mrs. Barton was taking a part with you.”

Amelia coloured in the thought of having been overheard; but it only made her form a still stronger resolution to expose herself to no further criticism, and Hamilton, full of one

subject, and impatient of a forced conversation on any other, was not sorry when Mr. Neville and Henry Barton made their appearance.

“ Ah ! ha ! ” said the Rector, when he saw Hamilton’s great coat hung up ; “ who have we got here !—I rather think we shall find an old acquaintance.” And as soon as he opened the door, Hamilton flew towards him, with a warmth of cordiality that raised him no little in the estimation of Mrs. Barton, whose husband, regardless of the presence of a stranger, greeted her with as affectionate a salute as if their separation had been for nine or ten weeks, instead of as many hours.

“ And so you have been dispensing justice, my dear Sir,” said Hamilton.

“ Yes, Sir, or dispensing with it ; ” replied the Rector.

“ And Mr. Barton, I presume, goes with you, to take a lesson for the time when he will be on the bench himself.”

Henry bowed. "It will be a long time, Sir, before I shall even anticipate any such honor."

Hamilton was disposed, just then, to think well of every body and every thing; he therefore put the most favorable construction on the turn of Henry's head, and the colour that mounted on his cheek as he spoke, and set him down for a sensible, modest young man.

After a good deal of conversation, which no one possessed the happy art of rendering general more than Hamilton, when he chose to exert it, he arose to depart, judiciously choosing the moment, according to a rule he laid down to himself, when he wished to be favorably spoken of, that he had concluded some remarks, which he had made in his most brilliant style.

"But, my dear Hamilton, you are not going to outrage our *Lares* and *Penates*, so far as to prefer the King's Arms to the Rectory?"

“Your room is ready for you,” said Catherine—“Rachel will be disappointed if you do not sleep here.”

Mrs. Barton said nothing; for she thought it would be just as decorous and convenient for him to be at the inn.

“As to myself,” said Hamilton, “believe me, I would neither go to the King’s Arms, nor the Queen’s Arms, so long as you kindly offer me a lodging under the same roof with you—but the fact is, I have got my friend Halston with me, and I promised him that I would not leave him to himself any longer than eight o’clock, for he has a great dread of too much of his own sweet society.”

Now, if the spirit of old English hospitality, still lingers in any corner of the kingdom, it is in that part of it y’cleped Yorkshire, and in no division of it, more than in the romantic little district of Craven, some of whose inhabitants it has fallen to our lot to describe.

No sooner therefore did Hamilton mention his having left a friend at the Inn, as the reason why he must take his leave so early, than exclamations of surprise and reproach broke from the lips of Mr. Neville and Catherine, at the same moment.

A friend with him, and not bring him to the house! what could he mean! what would his friend think of him? they would send for him directly;—Mr. Neville would fetch him himself,—this, however, Hamilton would not allow, so it was settled that he should go back to Halston, with an invitation from the Rector; and during his short absence, Catherine was busily employed in preparing her own room for the reception of this new guest, and ordering a small bed to be got ready for herself in Margaret's chamber; for the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Barton, and their children, to the family, left her just then no other accommodation.

In half an hour, every thing was comfortably

arranged, and Catherine was just giving her last directions to Rachel, as a loud knock at the door announced the return of Hamilton with his friend, whose long nose and small eyes she immediately recognised to be the same that had peeped, some weeks before, above an enormous bolstering of cravat, from behind the door at the ball.

To Henry and Amelia Mr. Halston presented a singular phenomenon. His hair straight, his whiskers curled, his waist laced in with a tightness which even the female sex have, at last, become rational enough to lay aside, his eye-brows corked in exact semicircles, his cheeks stained with a colour too glowing to be consonant with his spindle shanks, and rendered still more conspicuous from the whiteness of his teeth, displayed as they were by his thin lips, severed in perpetual and unmeaning laughter ; all which peculiarities, joined to the studied observance of the newest mode in every article

of his dress, from his low-crowned hat, to his high-heeled shoe, made him appear in their eyes, a complete caricature of the human species, under the most degrading effects of fashion and folly; and Mrs. Barton, in particular, shrunk from the attentions which he, according to the usage of modern times, paid to her, rather than to an unmarried female, with a repugnance so ill disguised, that Hamilton could not help enjoying the idea of the wound it would give to Halston's vanity, as he always placed to the account of his own personal attractions, that agreeable reception among the ladies which he, in fact, owed entirely to his good-nature, his propensity to gossiping, and his fortunate want of discrimination in precisely ascertaining the difference between being laughed with, and laughed at.

The conversation, for the remainder of the evening, took that general and desultory turn which, in England at least, is always produced

by the introduction, into a family circle, of strangers, and persons of different pursuits.—Hamilton and Halston talked of Tattersal's and the Argyle Rooms; Henry Barton and the Rector of Mr. Curwen's drill plough, the Horse-fair at Gargrave, and the Yorkshire Agricultural Society; and Amelia and her sister, in an under tone, of the art of cutting out sleeves without gussets, and skirts without gores, and other mysteries of female management. At length nine o'clock struck, and

“Punctual as lovers to the moment sworn,”

in came supper, which Halston imagined to be dinner, and no one undeceived him. He got into a little credit with Mrs. Barton by taking the currant wine for frontiniac, and the green gooseberry for champagne, and professing his utter want of belief when assured that they were home-made; and the readiness with which he christened every simple dish upon the table

by a French name, raised him likewise in the opinion of the Rector; who, when the party at length rose to separate, observed, after he and Hamilton had left the room, that he was evidently a travelled man, and he dared to say conversable enough when he was better known; adding, however, a wondering conjecture as to what part of Europe his costume was taken from.

“It seems,” said he, “to have a little of every country in it; the *tout ensemble* is certainly singular enough, but I suppose quite *comme il faut* to those who have sufficient taste to understand it.”

As soon as ever Hamilton had closed his room door, an indescribable feeling of satisfaction, at the thought of being once more under the same roof with Catherine, diffused itself over his breast: but in thinking of her it suddenly came into his mind, that she must have given up her own apartment to Halston; for he was well enough acquainted with the topography

of the house to be certain that there were no more spare bed-rooms in it, than those occupied by the Bartons and himself; and he as suddenly resolved that if Catherine's apartment were indeed destined to admit any other occupant than its lawful mistress, Halston, at all events, should not be the occupier.

“ Her dressing-glass would take fright at his long nose poking against it,” said he, as he seized his portmanteau, and gathered up the things he had scattered about the floor; “ and well it might; it is used to very different reflections.”

In a minute he was at Halston's door, and found his *compagnon de voyage*, in the act of binding a broad ribbon round his head, in order to keep his hair as he had previously arranged it, that is to say, as he did many other things, the wrong way.

“ My dear fellow,” said Hamilton, “ when you have settled your brain-belt, you must come

along with me. I want to shew you something in my room."

"But perhaps I don't want to see it, he ! he ! he !—what is it?—a ghost, or a rat, or a pretty face ! he ! he ! he !"

"Aye ! there you've guessed it. Come, make haste."

"By-the-bye, talking of pretty faces, what a sly fellow you were to tell me so much about the old parson, and so little about his daughters. Egad ! I like your notions of retirement ! he ! he ! he ! with such companions I would turn hermit to-morrow."

"Don't tell them so, Hally, for fear they should forswear the world in a hurry. But what do you think of Mr. Neville?"

"Oh he's a venerable ; a better looking old fellow than my old Big-wig was, that hummed Greek and Latin into me."

"That *tried* to do it, I suppose you mean."

"He ! he ! he ! well it would have been all

the same by this time—Greek and Latin are so thoroughly out. The Persic and Moslem are the things. Egad ! I should like to have the teaching of them to that delicious little prude, that sate next me at dinner ; I would be her Bulbul ;—who is she ?”

“ Mr. Neville’s eldest daughter, and wife to the young man Catherine speaks so affectionately to, and calls Henry.”

“ She cannot call him Solomon, at any rate, he ! he ! he ! Zounds ! the fellow never opens his mouth.”

“ A proof, perhaps, that he is more of a Solo- than you give him credit for : however he has opened it wide enough, at one time or other, to catch a very pretty little woman for his wife.”

“ Ah, the sly little rogue ! what a pattern of purity she looks, in her plaited cap, and her lace handkerchief, pinned up to her chin ! and then her slate-coloured sarsenet ! I don’t know

how it may be in Craven, but in London, I know, that colour means any thing but what some good folks fancy. I call it *defy-devil*, he! he! he! Egad, I always look on it as a fair challenge."

"Here, however, if you mean to play the devil, I fancy you will find yourself a little out in your rule."

"Egad I don't know that; didn't you mind how she blushed every time she caught me looking at her?—and then the expression of her eye, did you notice it?"

"Oh yes," said Hamilton, provoked at the self-conceit of Halston, which effectually shielded him from the laugh he had intended to have against him on this very subject, "I noticed it—

‘ ’Twas kind, but beautifully shy.’

and so her husband seemed to think; for he appeared mightily enamoured of the glances she cast towards him, every time she could look away from you."

“Oh the bumpkin ! Nature does, to be sure, throw her gifts strangely away, sometimes ! to see such fellows with their sound teeth, and bronzed complexions, and Herculean figures !”

“Yes, they beat the Halstons, and the Hamiltons, as far as the raw material goes,” said Hamilton, casting an approving glance at his leg, as he spoke.

“Raw material indeed,” said Halston, “look at Miss Neville, for raw material—there are native graces, and beauties unadorned:—and how she comes into a room !—egad, quite a village Lady Charlotte !”

“No ; she is not,” said Hamilton, “she has nothing of Lady Charlotte in her whole composition.”

“Well, she can’t help that,” said Halston, “it wouldn’t be fair to try her by such a standard. Yet the girl would make a figure at Almack’s, as well as the best of them ; her eyes and complexion would astonish some of our

fashionables, after all; and then what a head she has!"

"Aye, it would be worth changing with, would it not Hally?" said Hamilton, "Inside and out it would be a good bargain; but come now, pray, my dear fellow, finish swathing your own skull, such as it is, and come along. Now don't begin with your eye-brows, for I swear I will not wait another minute."

So saying, Hamilton hurried Halston off: and when he had got him into his own room, he pushed him towards the glass. "There," said he, "give me your opinion of the pretty face I promised to shew you—you may look at it till I come back, for I am going to bring you your gim-cracks."

"What do you mean?" cried Halston.

"I only mean," replied Hamilton, returning almost instantly with Halston's portmanteau, "to change rooms with you, for I hate moreen curtains, and you are not fond of dimity."

“No more I am; one wakes too soon by half in those cursed white beds. I like a scarlet or a crimson the best; the more positive colour I have about me the better I look.”

“Ah, you will look very captivating in this, I dare say, when you are fast asleep. You are like old hock, you look best in green.”

And so saying, Hamilton wished his friend good night, and left him to meditate upon the theory of colours, as far as it concerned coats, curtains, and complexions.

Hamilton had no sooner shut himself securely into the room from which he had so dexterously contrived to eject Halston, that he looked round it with feelings almost amounting to reverence. The perfect neatness of its arrangements, the unassuming witness that it seemed to bear to the innocent and rational pursuits of her to whom it belonged, all struck so forcibly upon his mind, that he was overcome with a tenderness which seemed to spi-

ritualize him in the purity of her that inspired it.

“Dear Catherine,” he exclaimed, as he pressed to his lips a book of devotional exercises, which he found on her toilette table, and which opened of itself at a discourse on self-examination. “How ‘sweetly good,’ how ‘innocently gay!’ Of such a woman well may it be said, that ‘the believing wife shall sanctify the unbelieving husband!’”

It was many years since he had recalled a passage of scripture to his mind, unless for the purpose of making a travestie, or a pointed quotation; it was now suggested, not by his head, but by his heart. He walked about the room, for some minutes, in a deep reverie. A few sketches in pencil were pinned against the wall, over the chimney piece. He recollected having been with Catherine to the places they delineated, and he deliberately took them down, and put them carefully in his letter case. He

then looked at her book-shelves: they contained about fifty volumes, chiefly of the British Essayists and poets,—the works of Moore and Byron were not, indeed, to be found among them: a gap in fashionable literature, which her country education and distance from the metropolis sufficiently accounted for, and Hamilton, notwithstanding he had them by rote himself, was well pleased to see their places supplied by Spenser, Milton and Thomson.—All the translations from the classics, which he had read with her, during the winter, were likewise there, with papers of reference in the passages he had pointed out to her particular attention. Could he even try to sleep, under such feelings as these objects inspired? No—he undrew the snowy curtain, and placed his repeater in the watch-pocket, and then again walked about the room, as lonely as Adam in Paradise—he went towards the window—Catherine's canary-birds were

hung there, for she never trusted them during the night from her own protection ; but their little heads were hidden under their wings, unconscious of the absence of their mistress ;—the moon was just disappearing—a few stars shone stedfastly in the deep blue concave of the cloudless heavens, and not a sound was heard, except the gentle waving of a laurestina against the win'ow, and the distant bark of a dog, yet more faintly answered at intervals, by another in an opposite direction.

“How beautiful is night,” said Hamilton, “but it must be night in a scene like this—not in London.”—And as the vices and miseries which exist in that vast and overgrown metropolis, arose before his imagination, a feeling of bitter reproach passed his mind, in the reflection that he had added his share of evil to one, and of indifference towards the other ; and he almost envied the quiet and guileless life which had fallen to the lot of his worthy tutor, when

he contrasted it with the glare and mischief of his own. "I am not what poor Neville wished to make me," thought he,—“but however, I may yet be destined to owe my reformation to him,” and under the influence of this reflection he did what he was by no means in the habit of doing, he implored other aid than his own strength, to assist him in the victory over himself, and then retired to rest; soothed by that sweet serenity which is invariably inspired by the hope of being, even for a moment, in such a frame of mind, as may be acceptable to the Author of our being, the Great Source of all Perfection.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

HAPPINESS is ever wakeful. Hamilton rose soon after six; but, early as he thought himself, Catherine was before hand with him. He drew back the window-curtain, and beheld her, with her nephew and niece on each side of her, waiting for a draught of milk for them, from the cow; a small basket of barley hung on her arm, and when the little ones had drank

their milk, she, to their great delight, called all her feathered-dependents about her, and, scattering the corn among them, enjoyed the busy scene as much as the children. Once, only, did she look up to the window, and then for such an instant, that Hamilton was uncertain whether she saw him or not; and when he went down stairs, to join her in her morning avocations, she had returned into the house, and remained in Mrs. Barton's room till breakfast.

“ You are come just in time to settle the matter,” said Mr. Neville to Hamilton, as he entered the parlour. “ You must know, Sir, we had engaged ourselves to-day, little dreaming of the pleasure of seeing you here, to go to Gordale Scaur—we are to meet our friends from the Hall there; we shall take some provisions with us, they will do the same; so you see it will be quite a fashionable thing—a *pic-nic*, I believe you call it; and the rooks and the goats

will look down upon us, and wonder what we are about."

"And I hope they will look at me, as well, and at Halston too; what have we done, that we may not be of the party?"

"Aye, what indeed! that's the very thing I wanted to establish; I said you would like the ride; but Miss Catherine, forsooth, must be wiser than her father, and find out that you would neither of you be at all amused, and that you would find it a great deal more entertaining to stay at home with me: so, you see, she very readily gave up the pleasure of my company; and she and all the rest of the party, were to be as merry as youth and fine weather would make them, whilst we are to sit looking at each other, till they please to come back again;—wouldn't stay at home herself, you mind."

"No," said Catherine, deeply coloring as she spoke; "you know, my dear father, the

Longerofts proposed going, quite in compliment to my sister and me, and I thought it would look so extremely selfish in me to stay away."

"Certainly," said Colonel Hamilton, very gravely; "if the Longcrofts are concerned in the affair, I should think it a dangerous thing to fail in all due etiquette."

"Yes, yes," said the worthy Rector, "it will be the best for us all to go together; we shall be all the better for the excursion."

Hamilton only bowed, for he scarcely knew at that moment whether he would go or not.—He had not much inclination to spend the day with Edward Longcroft, in so small a party that they could not get out of each other's influence, but he had still less to leave Catherine to him, without any competition; least of all to spend the day with the Rector and Halston, who would interrupt the rationality of a *tête-à-tête*, without adding any thing to the

vivacity of a trio. He was, nevertheless, piqued at receiving no invitation from the ladies; for Mrs. Barton, always timid and retiring, was particularly so in his presence, and absolutely shrank from Halston, whose attentions, the evening before, had only excited in her a singular mixture of risibility and disgust; indeed she heartily wished that they had both staid at the lakes, or any where else, till she had returned to Blackthorn Cottage, and even Catherine also, was at that moment wishing that they had postponed their arrival, at any rate for a single day.

Whilst the ladies were thus occupied with their own thoughts, Hamilton's impatience of their silence increased every moment; for, unable to divine the cause, he placed it all to Edward Longcroft's account; and that idea determined him to make one of the party, in order, that he might judge for himself, how far the Squire Junior, as he contemptuously called

him, might be intending to amuse himself with Catherine, whose consequence, he at that moment fancied himself called on, from his regard to the Rector, to assert. A message from Halston, however, desiring to see him immediately, broke the chain of his cogitations, and he swung out of the room, in no very good humor, which was not much improved by finding Halston only half-way advanced in his toilette, and looking all the misery he felt, at being, for the first time in his life, deprived of the services of his valet.

“It does not signify, Hamilton,” cried he, “I cannot do without Beaujeu; I have been trying, for this last hour, to dress myself, and I cannot get on a single inch!”

“Then you must depute me to the honor of finishing you,” said Hamilton, “for I swear you shall have no other assistance. I did not bring any of my own rascals with me, because I deemed them not meet personages to intro-

duce into such a house as this, and as I managed to wait on myself three months, I shall make you try to do the same for three days, or else you must take up your quarters again at the King's Arms; for Master Beaujeu shall not bring his impudent face here, if I can help it."

Halston was one of the best-natured creatures in the world, and in reality he had much rather have done without his valet, than introduce him to the annoyance of any one; he therefore very readily acceded to Hamilton's offer of assistance, and begged him to have the goodness to buckle his belt, and tie the strings of his cravat. Whilst Hamilton was endeavouring to screw him into a proper wasp-like circumference, (and he had certainly nothing of the wasp in his composition, but the shape) he could not help smiling at the absurdity of fashion, which could thus make a man naturally one of the sparest of forms, have recourse

to such artificial means, to make himself still more slender.

“ One cannot say to you, Halston, as the Justice does to Sir John Falstaff, ‘ you live in great waste,’ but one may venture to say, he that buckles in your belt could not live in less ; for my part, I only wonder how you can live in so little.”

“ Oh, enough, and to spare,” cried Halston, endeavouring to take a long breath as he spoke ; “ you would have one look like an alderman—nothing’s so bad as a show of flesh in a gentleman.”

“ What, it takes from the blood, does it ? very well ; we must grant the dandies the same essentials as their race-horses—long pedigrees, shining coats, and slender legs ; but apropos of that, I believe, at last, Monsieur Beaujeu must be admitted as far as the gate ; for we shall want the curricule and his attendance this morning, as Miss Neville has got a sort of

pic-nic party arranged, and we are to have a cold dinner among the rocks, and to be monstrously agreeable and happy all the day long, or all the long day; perhaps that's nearer the mark."

"I don't know why a happy day should not be a long one—it's what every body would wish; I shall take the pretty little puritan in my curriele, and I dare say we shall not find time very tedious.—He! he! he!"

Now Hamilton had been thinking of asking Halston for the curriele, in order that he might drive Catherine; but he began to suspect this was to be one of his unlucky days, and under this impression he rejoined the breakfast-table, with a still more moody countenance than he had exhibited at it before.

Halston, *au contraire*, was in perfect good-humor with himself and every body else; Mrs. Barton was forced to cast her eyes down, as he took his seat, lest she should betray the smile

which she found it impossible to repress, at her husband's wondering survey of his studied morning dishabille; the consciousness of it suffused her cheek with a fine crimson, which did not escape the notice of Halston, who, flattering himself that it was excited by the hope of his renewing his attentions, instantly drew his chair nearer to her, and recommenced his court with a zeal which was no way lessened by his conviction that it was beginning to be appreciated.

The conversation, during breakfast, turned entirely upon the ride. Mr. Halston offered Mrs. Barton a seat in his curricule, but she declined it, with a conciseness that might have dispelled the delusion in which he was indulging respecting her admiration of him: he chose however, to attribute it to her fear of exciting the jealousy of her husband; and as he had never before awakened the "green-eyed mon-

ster," he felt his consequence no little flattered by the imaginary discovery of a power which he had hitherto, with all his vanity, been unable to pique himself upon possessing.

"Then, perhaps, Miss Neville will favour me."

Catherine replied she was much obliged to him, but she intended to ride her own favourite poney.

Poor Halston looked discomfited at the thought of having to exhibit his elegant curricie without a lady in it; and still more so when he heard that he should not even have an opportunity of exhibiting it at all; as Mr. Neville observed that they had much better all go on horseback, the most beautiful parts of the ride being inaccessible to carriages.

"But so many of us!" Halston squeaked out in dismay, "we shall be quite a cavalcade, he! he! he!"

“Like Chaucer’s Pilgrims setting out for Canterbury,” said Hamilton, “and you shall be the

————— ‘yonge squier,
A lover and a lustie bachelor,
With locks cruli, as they were laid in presse,
Of twentie years of age he was, I guesse’ ”

“And how will you go then?” resumed Halston to Mrs. Barton.

“I shall ride behind my husband, Sir.”

“Behind him! what you have a jaunting car then?” and again hopes of exhibiting his curriele arose.

“No Sir, we have no carriage of any description.”

“Except carts, waggons, and wheelbarrows,” added Henry Barton.

“Then how do you travel behind Mr. Barton?”

“A double horse, I meant, Sir.”

“A double horse, he! he! he! What sort of a creature is that?”

“Did you never see a lady on a pillion, Sir?” said Mr. Neville.

“I do not recollect having had that pleasure, Sir.”

“Then, Sir, you would never have guessed the old enigma—

‘Come tell me this riddle without any pother,
Five legs on one side, and three on the other;
Two eyes in my forehead, and four on my back,
One tongue that is silent, and two that can clack.’”

“Excellent,” cried Hamilton, “I dare say that is Catherine’s composition; she shall be called the Craven Sphinx.”

“He! he! he!” chuckled Halston, “a famous beast that would be, to shew off at Exeter Change.”

“Aye Halston, and you to exhibit it—what with the show, and the showman, it would be

quite the rage; Chien Munito and the Sword-Swallower might go hang themselves; and the Bonassus, and the Boa Constrictor into the bargain."

Halston laughed again, for fortunately it was all one to him whether he laughed at himself or any thing else: but, however, as it was necessary for him to make some arrangement, in place of the curricie, he went to the King's Arms, to give his orders to Monsieur Beaujeu; as that gentleman had been positively interdicted by Hamilton from making his appearance at the Rectory any further than the gate.

As soon as he was gone Mrs. Barton retired to her children, and Henry and the Rector went to look after the horses. Catherine waited a few minutes in the expectation that Hamilton would make some remark on the arrangements for the day; but finding that he continued silent, she attributed his gravity to his dislike of the excursion altogether; as she knew

he was too fastidious in his ideas of pleasure to find it merely in the simple enjoyment of natural beauties.

“ I hope, Colonel Hamilton,” said she, gravely, “ you do not join our party this morning, merely out of ceremony. I should feel much more comfortable if you would stay away, or contrive some little plan for yourself and Mr. Halston; now pray do not go with us, unless you really feel an inclination for the ride.”

“ You are very considerate—very kind to give me leave to ride if I feel inclined.”

“ No, Sir,” said Catherine, with more spirit, “ I could not possibly mean to dictate to you—I was only afraid your politeness might induce you to act in opposition to your inclinations.”

“ And you will find I am not quite so polite as you imagined,” said he, “ for you must allow me to say that I shall go, simply because it will give me pleasure: I can have no other inducement, for I dare say all the rest of the

party would very readily excuse my attendance."

"How can you say so seriously what you cannot think?" said Catherine, her voice melted as she spoke—he seized her hand.

"Ask Longcroft," said he, as he pressed it to his lips—his voice trembled as much as her own. Catherine, with the intuitive perception of her sex, felt that it was jealousy that agitated him thus. Could any declaration of love be more explicit? A flash of feminine triumph shot through her eyes—it was but for a moment, the next she cast them to the ground, but that moment was long enough to shew Hamilton how much he had betrayed himself.

Just then the horses were brought to the door. Catherine had yet her habit to put on. Scarcely did she feel the steps, as she flew up stairs, buoyant in happiness and hope.

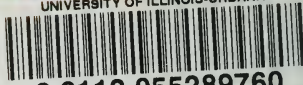
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